

PUBLIC HEALTH

World-Wide VD Fight

Experts attending international symposium hear that apathy and indifference are stopping the advance toward final conquest of venereal diseases.

► **CALL** for a world-wide fight to stop venereal diseases was issued at the opening session of the First International Symposium on Venereal Diseases and the Treponematoses.

The symposium, held in Washington, was sponsored by the World Health Organization and the U. S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare's Public Health Service.

"No excuse for failure of final solution of the problem of venereal disease" exists, Dr. Felix J. Underwood, executive officer of the Mississippi State Board of Health, Jackson, said.

He pointed to the developments in the way of scientific discoveries, new approaches in disease fighting and education, and current thinking as reasons why the problem can be solved.

Apathy and indifference toward the problem, existing now even among public health workers, are stopping the advance toward final conquest of these diseases, in Dr. Underwood's opinion.

The success achieved in control of venereal diseases in the past 20 years "can be considered only a temporary abatement," he said. These diseases have serious potentials for rising again. Control of them will be permanent "only to the extent that the diseases are controlled world-wide."

Predict Rate Rise

► **A PREDICTION** that syphilis will rise again was given at the symposium by Dr. Ira Leo Schamberg of the Department of Public Health, Philadelphia. Syphilis, in his view, will continue to threaten humanity with periodic epidemics until immunization against it becomes a reality.

The question of whether the venereal diseases are really conquered was also raised by Dr. Hugo Hecht of Cleveland. On the basis of figures for Cuyahoga County, Ohio, he estimates at least 2,415,000 persons in the United States now have syphilis.

Growing need for health education is seen also by Dr. Douglas J. Campbell of the University of Sheffield, England. Britain, he reported, has seen a dramatic decline since 1946 in the number of early cases of syphilis, but he feels that there is danger in the optimistic belief that venereal diseases are no longer a threat to society or a challenge to medicine.

Britain, Dr. Douglas said, is faced by another problem today. Men from the West Indies and West Africa, where yaws is ever present, have been brought in to work in industrial areas. Positive tests are being reported at clinics in a fair percentage of

patients with no history or evidence of recent syphilitic infection. Some of these show bony damage and parchment scars suggestive of yaws.

Antibiotics Helpful

► **THE NEWER ANTIBIOTICS**, or so-called mold remedies, have proved effective in all five venereal diseases, Dr. R. V. Rajam of the Government General Hospital and Madras Medical College, Madras, India, reported.

The five diseases in which he tried various antibiotics are syphilis, gonorrhea, chancroid, granuloma inguinale and lymphogranuloma venereum. The antibiotics were chloramphenicol, tetracycline, chlor-tetracycline and oxytetracycline.

Of all the antibiotics used, tetracycline produced the fewest toxic reactions.

Because of the "current prohibitive cost" of the newer antibiotics, Dr. Rajam said, penicillin remains the drug of choice for

syphilis and gonorrhea. The newer antibiotics, he thinks, have a place in penicillin-resistant syphilis or in patients sensitive to penicillin.

Good results in treatment of early syphilis with another of the newer antibiotics, erythromycin, were reported by Dr. Orihuela Montero of the General Hospital, La Paz, Bolivia.

Sex-Linked Universe

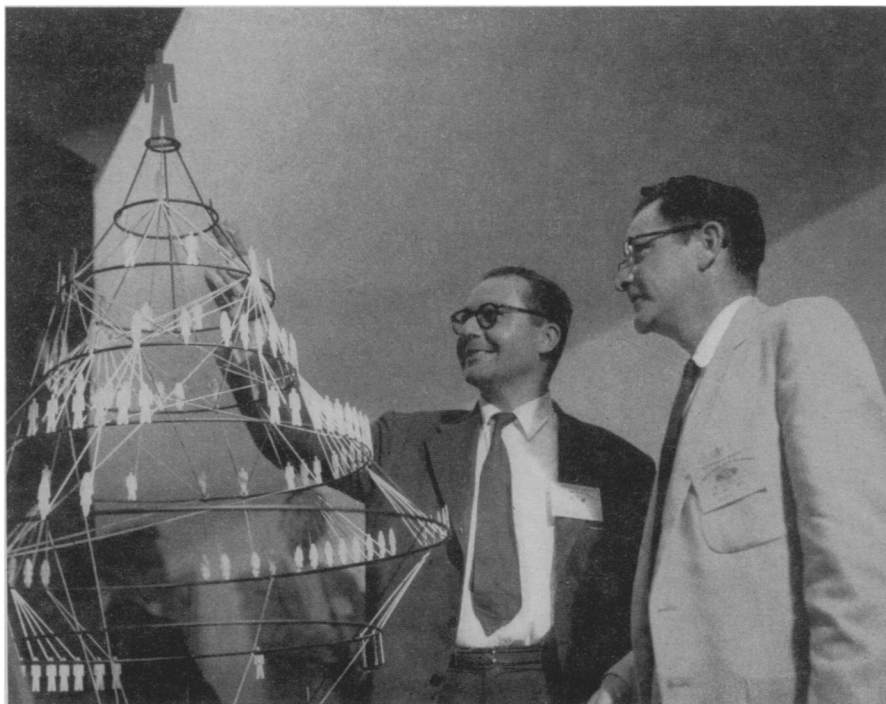
► **THE NEW WAY** to stop the spread of syphilis is to put a web of preventive treatment around each sex-linked universe in which a case of syphilis is found.

Formerly, syphilis fighters tried to stop the disease by finding each link in the chain of possible infected persons. They have found, however, that the spread of syphilis is not as simple as links in a chain. The disease involves a "sexually interlinked universe."

The new way of stopping syphilis was reported by Drs. Johannes Stuart and James F. Donohue of the U. S. Public Health Service.

An example of the web method given by Dr. Stuart was an epidemic of syphilis in West Point, Ga. About three years ago rumors of this epidemic in a county with 4,500 population reached the Public Health Service.

A young man rejected for military service was found to have secondary syphilis



BIRDCAGE EXHIBIT—The model on left, only partially shown, represents sexually interlinked universe found during investigation of syphilis epidemic started by man at the top. To stop the epidemic, health authorities now recommend and use a web of preventive treatment thrown around the entire "universe." Looking at the exhibit in this picture are Dr. Rudolf Kadem, left, of Germany and William Hays, Public Health Service investigator stationed in Georgia.

with a positive blood test. He was sent to a clinic for treatment and, as is customary, the local health authorities tried to trace his sexual contacts to give treatment to those infected.

Tracing the sexual linkage of the disease proved very difficult. Actually, it was found, there were 211 persons who had been exposed to syphilis because they all belonged to the same sexually interlinked universe.

To stop this and similar epidemics, scientists found, it is necessary to put a web of preventive treatment around this whole universe.

Antibiotic for Gonorrhea

➤ A NEW ANTIBIOTIC, distantly related to streptomycin, has proved "useful" in treatment of both gonorrhea and of urethritis not due to gonorrhea, Dr. R. R. Willcox of St. Mary's Hospital, London, reported at the symposium.

The new antibiotic is called spiramycin. It was made from the mold-like organism, *Streptomyces ambofaciens*. Gonorrhea can be cured by a single dose, but results were not as good as with multiple doses which gave excellent results.

When compared with other antibiotics, spiramycin gave results equal to those with oxytetracycline, tetracycline, chlortetracycline and erythromycin. It was "superior" to streptomycin, sulfa drugs, penicillin and chloramphenicol.

Syphilitic Brain Disease

➤ THE BRAIN DISEASE caused by syphilis has undergone a change since 1940, Dr. W. D. Nicol of the Royal Free Hospital, Epsom, England, reported at the symposium.

At the Mott Clinic where Dr. Nicol was clinical director, so few cases of syphilitic brain disease are seen that the clinic worries about maintaining the strain of malaria parasites formerly relied on for treatment.

Since 1945, penicillin has become the main treatment, with malaria used only as a supplement.

Since 1940, more and more syphilitic brain disease patients are being seen with the simple, dementing, destructive type of paresis. Before 1940, there were more with delusions of grandeur, the kind who thought they were Napoleon or some other powerful character, and more with manic or depressed kinds of insanity.

Syphilis, Dr. Nicol believes, "is at last on the road to full control."

Predict Neurosyphilis

➤ AT LEAST 15,000 VETERANS treated for syphilis during World War II will be found to have neurosyphilis.

This prediction was made at the First International Symposium on Venereal Diseases and the Treponematoses held in Washington under the auspices of the

World Health Organization and the U. S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare's Public Health Service.

The prediction is from Dr. S. Ross Taggart and Stanley B. Russell of the Veterans Administration and Miss Eleanor V. Price, U. S. Public Health Service. It is based on statistical analysis of results of spinal fluid examinations of 8,317 veterans who were diagnosed as having primary or secondary syphilis but who had no spinal fluid examination while in service.

Of the 15,000 expected to have neurosyphilis, a "substantial proportion will in the future require the expensive care" required for this complication, the Government scientists said.

In neurosyphilis, the brain, spinal cord and blood vessels supplying them may be attacked by the causative germs. Symptoms range from headache and dizziness, blurred vision, ringing in the ears and rheumatic pains to apoplectic strokes, the excruciatingly painful and paralyzing locomotor ataxia, and the severe mental sickness, paresis, or general paralysis of the insane.

Teen-Age Problem

➤ VENEREAL DISEASE as a teen-age problem was stressed in reports to the First International Symposium on Venereal Diseases and the Treponematoses held in Washington.

Treponematoses means infections with treponema. This big group of germs includes the spirochetes that cause syphilis, the germ that causes yaws, and various other related germs.

Of all cases of gonorrhea reported in Iowa, one-fifth to one-fourth continues to be in the teen-age group, Dr. Abraham Gelperin of the Des Moines-Polk County, Iowa, Health Department reported.

In the past when there were large numbers of cases of venereal disease, infected teen-agers were not referred to social agencies for help with their problems.

"Perhaps by slighting the fact that these teen-agers grow up to have children, an unhealthy attitude toward venereal diseases was fostered," Dr. Gelperin suggested.

The lack of concern over the teen-age group, he said, has been emphasized by four epidemics of venereal disease in Polk county.

Acute and chronic cervicitis, or inflammation of the neck of the womb, was found in 60 girls under age 20 in a study reported by Dr. Leopold Z. Goldstein of the Albert Einstein Medical Center, Philadelphia.

The 60 girls were part of a group of 155 under age 20 named as contacts by males being treated for gonorrhea. Signs of gonorrhea were found in 20 of them. Seven of the teen-agers also had syphilis.

Of the whole group of 155, 20 claimed they were married and living with their husbands or separated, while 135 were unmarried. Of the unmarried, 29 admitted pregnancies, while 16 of the married had borne children or had abortions.

Science News Letter, June 9, 1956

ICHTHYOLOGY

Yankee Fish Visit Southern Waters

➤ A COLD-WATER fish has been caught in Chesapeake Bay for the first time, along with another cold water specimen that rarely ventures this far south.

The fish are the tomcod and the sea herring. They were caught by biologists on a research vessel of the Virginia Fisheries Laboratory, Gloucester Point, Va.

Science News Letter, June 9, 1956

SCIENCE NEWS LETTER

VOL. 69 JUNE 9, 1956 NO. 23

The Weekly Summary of Current Science, published every Saturday by SCIENCE SERVICE, Inc., 1719 N. St., N. W., Washington 6, D. C., North 7-2255. Edited by WATSON DAVIS.

Subscription rates: 1 yr., \$5.50; 2 yrs., \$10.00; 3 yrs., \$14.50; single copy, 15 cents, more than six months old, 25 cents. No charge for foreign postage.

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Printed in U. S. A. Entered as second class matter at the post office at Washington, D. C., under the act of March 3, 1879. Acceptance for mailing at the special rate of postage provided for by Sec. 34.40, P. L. and R., 1948 Edition, paragraph (d) (act of February 28, 1925; 39 U. S. Code 283) authorized February 28, 1950. Established in mimeographed form March 13, 1922. Title registered as trademark, U. S. and Canadian Patent Offices. Indexed in Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature, Abridged Guide, and the Engineering Index.

Member Audit Bureau of Circulation, Advertising Representatives: Howland and Howland, Inc., 1 E. 54th St., New York 22, Eldorado 5-5666, and 435 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago 11, Superior 7-6048.

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