

PUBLIC HEALTH

FTC Hearings Set

➤ A PRELIMINARY hearing of the Federal Trade Commission's charges against six antibiotics manufacturers has been set for Oct. 17. (See SNL, Aug. 16, p. 102.)

The hearing had been scheduled to take place in New York on Oct. 1 at the time the charges were issued to the drug companies in August. A pre-trial conference has already been held dealing with procedural matters.

The purpose of the Oct. 17 hearing is to determine if the drug companies involved will produce the records requested by the attorneys representing the FTC. Legal action may have to be taken to secure them.

Hearings on the merits of the complaints by the FTC are expected to begin near the first of next year. At the conclusion of these hearings the examiner, Frank Hier, will decide whether or not a legal case exists against the drug firms. This is not a final decision of the FTC. Either side can appeal the examiner's decision.

To date, two of the firms have formally denied the charges. All six informally denied the charges shortly after they were issued.

The charges include price fixing and monopolistic practices against American Cyanamid Company, Bristol-Myers Company and its subsidiary, Bristol Laboratories, Inc., Chas. Pfizer & Co., Inc., Olin Mathie-

son Chemical Corporation and the Upjohn Company.

Pfizer was charged with obtaining a patent for the manufacture of tetracycline by making false, misleading and incorrect statements to the U. S. Patent Office. The Patent Office is of the opinion that the patent in question was granted upon investigation and information that met specifications to the satisfaction of the Patent Office.

The FTC charges were issued at the conclusion of a two-year study of the antibiotics industry. As the FTC Bureau of Economics investigation neared completion, the FTC launched an investigation into the practices of individual companies.

Some of the subjects for consideration at the hearings will probably include the question of whether or not other drug companies have been prevented from entering the antibiotic field through the alleged monopolistic practices of the six firms on trial; justification for the patent in question when FTC investigators charge that the process does not warrant a patent; proof that the patent was granted on the basis of misleading information submitted to the Patent Office and price control of antibiotics among those firms involved.

Science News Letter, October 11, 1958

ROENTGENOLOGY

Stop Heart for X-Rays

➤ A PROMISING new X-ray procedure that involves actually stopping the heart to obtain more accurate films of coronary arteries was outlined by three Philadelphia doctors.

The procedure, as yet attempted on experimental animals only, was described before the 59th annual meeting of the American Roentgen Ray Society in Washington by Drs. J. Stauffer Lehman, Randal A. Boyer and Fred S. Winter, all of Philadelphia.

The technique consists of "arresting" the heart to allow more effective placement of the opaque material that is used to outline the artery, thus producing a more definite image. The heart is stopped momentarily by injecting a drug, acetylcholine, into an arm vein, Dr. Lehman said.

At present, the pumping action of the heart "washes out" much of the opaque substance, producing a less desirable image.

The potential dangers of such a procedure are as yet to be determined, the doctors pointed out. But their experience would suggest that the procedure may be of considerable worth in making satisfactory films of the coronary arterial system. Besides overcoming the possible dangers involved in such a procedure, after perfection of the technique itself is achieved, there will still be the problem of interpreting the images produced, the doctors commented.

Two Ann Arbor, Mich., radiologists, Drs.

E. Boblitt and Melvin M. Figley, recommended caution in the use of an X-ray procedure for studying the main abdominal artery. The procedure involves insertion of a needle into the back and into the aorta, the main trunk artery of the abdomen. An opaque substance is injected through the needle to outline the aorta while X-ray films are taken.

One complication that arises from this procedure is the fact that sometimes the opaque substance is forced between coats of the artery, "dissecting" or separating them. This diagnostic procedure is not harmless because serious complications from it have appeared from time to time and are continuing to occur, the scientists said.

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CHEMISTRY

Brain Chemical Linked To Vitamin Deficiency

➤ A SIMPLE chemical compound that is found only in the brain and spinal cord is now suspected to be involved in the epileptic-like seizures associated with vitamin B-6 deficiency.

The chemical is gamma aminobutyric acid (GABA). Dr. Eugene Roberts, chairman of the department of biochemistry, City of Hope Medical Center, Durate, Calif., established in 1950 that GABA is formed

from glutamic acid. This is a chemical long thought to have a special role in brain function.

Subsequent work by Dr. Roberts has shown that a normal amount of GABA in the brain is dependent on the balance between its rate of formation and the rate at which it is used by nerve cells. A dietary deficiency of vitamin B-6, or a disturbance of the function of the vitamin in the body by chemicals, leads to a slower rate of formation of GABA and a consequent decreased amount in the brain, Dr. Roberts reported at a symposium on "Biochemistry of the Brain" at the American Chemical Society meeting in Chicago.

So far, various attempts have failed to increase GABA levels in the brains of normal laboratory animals by treatment with drugs, or by injection or feeding of the chemical. GABA does not appear to enter the brain readily from the blood stream.

GABA is unevenly distributed in various parts of the brain, Dr. Roberts reported. There were ten-fold differences in the level of the chemical in different areas of the organ.

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PSYCHOLOGY

Rational Psychotherapy Cures One Homosexual

➤ HOMOSEXUALITY can be cured by "rational psychotherapy", Dr. Albert Ellis, a New York psychologist, explained to the meeting of the American Psychological Association in Washington.

"Rational psychotherapy" is based on the idea that neurotic feelings and behavior as well as all the most significant human emotions and behavior stem from basic assumptions, beliefs or philosophies which the individual holds.

In this therapy, the patient must be shown that he is bolstering his irrational beliefs by continually re-indoctrinating himself with his nonsensical philosophies. De-propagandization is taught by the therapist.

In a case described to the psychologists, the young male patient had been taught by his parents and others in his childhood that he might be rejected by any attractive girl and that this would be a crushing, terrible thing.

Now, as a young man of 35, he kept bolstering this fear of rejection and humiliation and continued to avoid all girls and women.

In treating the young man, Dr. Ellis said, he made no attempt to make him give up his homosexual desires or activities. Instead, he made a direct attack on his irrational fear of approaching girls.

The patient was so improved by the therapy that he stopped it after 19 sessions. Now, after three years, he is not only happily married, but he is teaching zoology in a Midwestern university and getting along well in his profession.

His deviated pattern of homosexuality was completely changed in the course of therapy, Dr. Ellis reported, and he became a "virtually 100% heterosexually oriented individual."

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