

MEDICINE

Plagued by Tropical Acne

Physicians are told to pay more attention to acne. Tropical acne was one of the worst Army health problems in the Southwest Pacific during World War II.

► TROPICAL ACNE is one of the worst Army health problems in the southwest Pacific, and is expected to be troublesome in Viet-Nam.

Dr. Marion B. Sulzberger of the U.S. Army Surgeon General's office, who is professor emeritus of dermatology at New York University, told SCIENCE SERVICE that tropical acne during World War II at times exceeded all other diseases for which men were evacuated home from the south Pacific.

"It is too soon to know whether this will be the case with men in south Viet-Nam," Dr. Sulzberger said, "but we are anticipating something of the same problem."

Ordinarily the acne decade is between the ages of 13 and 22, but in cases of tropical acne, men in their late 20's and early 30's are affected.

Tropical acne is partly caused by unhygienic conditions in which men cannot keep their skin sufficiently clean, Dr. Sulzberger explained, but the heat and humidity are mainly to blame. The skin never really dries out, and germs have a holiday. Staphylococcus infection results when the horny substance of skin closes up the oil glands' openings.

At a closing session of the American Medical Association meeting at Chicago, Dr. Sulzberger asked physicians to pay more attention to the seriousness of acne. It comes at a time when young people can least withstand its effects, and it can leave lifetime scars both physically and psychologically.

The acne of the late teen-ager is usually due to imperfect sex hormone adjustment, which causes the oil glands of the skin to become plugged, with resulting infection. Scrubbing with soap and water, along with other simple treatment, will often keep acne under control, but patients should not attempt to treat themselves with drugstore preparations.

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Steroid for Asthmatics

► FIFTEEN EXTREMELY dwarfed asthmatic children in Denver, Colo., can look forward to from one to three inches of growth as the result of taking a comparatively new steroid called Stanazolol.

Dr. Samuel C. Bukantz, medical and research director of the Children's Asthma Research Institute and Hospital, Denver, told SCIENCE SERVICE that the children are runts in the immunological sense. Stanazolol, supplied as Winstrol by the Winthrop Laboratories, New York, has the chemical formula 17-beta-hydroxy, 17-alpha-methyl androstano (3,2-C) pyrazole.

All the children treated have intractable asthma and are taking adrenal corticoids at the same time they are taking the carefully administered oral Stanazolol. Other steroids have previously stimulated growth in runts, but Dr. Bukantz said the drugs, in some cases, caused harmful effects and were discarded as dangerous.

Stanazolol is still in a preliminary stage of study, but so far no harmful results have been noted. In a report to the American Medical Association meeting in Chicago, Dr. Bukantz emphasized the fact that the 150 children housed and treated at the Denver center have been relieved of emotional stress due to their disease.

They come from all parts of the United States and as far away as Israel for treatment. The children are between six and 16 years old, and all go to Denver public schools during the day.

Successful research also is being done with adrenalin-resistant children who have severe asthma. The critical threat to life in such cases as status asthmaticus is the degree to which carbon dioxide is retained or improperly removed, with consequent increase in blood acid.

Dr. Bukantz is using replacement therapy including some new organic buffering solu-

tions being given intravenously. He told SCIENCE SERVICE that he avoids all sedation since many of the children are already on the borderline of coma. He includes the usual anti-allergic treatment and general rehabilitation measures.

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Suntan Is Old-Fashioned

► DANGERS OF SKIN CANCER will soon make today's suntan status symbol out-of-date, a Duke University dermatologist predicted at Chicago.

Dr. J. Graham Smith Jr. forecast that the pale medieval type of complexion will be popular in the next ten years. He said that even young women in their 20's show signs of skin cancer if they are of fair complexion and overexposed to sunlight.

He said that sun lamps are dangerous and of no value, except psychologically.

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Bloodless Brain Surgery

► A BLOODLESS form of brain surgery has brought new hope to victims of Parkinson's disease.

Dr. Irving S. Cooper disclosed in Chicago that it is now possible to abolish parkinsonian tremor and rigidity in certain patients with better than 85% chance of success.

The technique utilizes freezing as a surgical tool instead of a scalpel. The damaged areas in the brain are frozen and destroyed.

Dr. Cooper is director of the department of neurologic surgery at St. Barnabas Hospital for Chronic Diseases in New York.

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BLOODLESS BRAIN SURGERY—A technician transfers liquid nitrogen into the medical apparatus used in the new bloodless brain surgery operation at St. Barnabas Hospital in New York. The equipment was made by the Linde Company, Division of Union Carbide Corporation.