

MEDICINE

Doctors Are Reading—

Child Beatings Common

► **HORROR STORIES** of child beatings that result in permanent injury or death do not always come from low-income or psychopathic families, doctors will be reading in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 198:42, 1962.

A leading editorial said that mistreatment of children may be one of the main causes of their deaths.

Abuse is likely to be a more frequent cause of death than leukemia, cystic fibrosis and muscular dystrophy, the editorial indicated. It may also rank with automobile accidents and brain inflammation as a cause of acquired disturbances of the central nervous system.

A research study reported that attacking parents may be following a pattern learned in their childhood when they were abused.

Undesired children may be one cause, although beatings are often found in families of several other children who are treated lovingly. The children are usually infants, under three years of age, when they are beaten.

"The ease and frequency with which a child is seized by the arms or legs" was pointed out as the cause of serious skeletal injuries. X-rays will help to evaluate child abuse and help prevent further beatings if doctors confront parents with the picture. Most parents try to conceal the real cause of their children's injuries. Drs. C. Henry Kempe, Brandt F. Steele, William Droegemueller and Henry K. Silver of Denver, Colo., all at the University of Colorado School of Medicine, and Dr. Frederic N. Silverman of Children's Hospital, Cincinnati, reported the study (p. 17). They surveyed 302 cases in 71 hospitals throughout the United States, and told of reports from 77 district attorneys concerning 447 cases in a one-year period.

Vaccine Loses Potency

Four-in-one vaccine for childhood diseases is in short supply. The reason is loss of potency in pertussis vaccine, which makes up one of the four components of the diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis and poliomyelitis vaccine (DTPP), Dr. Margaret Pittman of the Division of Biologics Standards, National Institutes of Health, Bethesda, Md., said. The reason for reduced potency is not known. However, if poliomyelitis vaccine is not included, which is the case with the triple vaccine, DTP, commonly given to children by pediatricians, a different preservative called thimerosal (Merthiolate) is used (p. 25).

Because potency declines after a short period in the quadruple vaccines, some pharmaceutical houses stopped making them. Federal requirements were revised last year so that a druggist cannot sell a pertussis vaccine that has been issued from cold storage longer than four months.

Insulin Best Treatment

Insulin still is the most trustworthy treatment for diabetes among many patients, another editorial pointed out in commenting on an article by two Boston physicians on failures with an oral drug, tolbutamide (p. 43).

Drs. Rafael A. Camerini-Davalos and Alexander Marble of the Harvard Medical School said that among 1,965 diabetic patients treated with tolbutamide for periods of one month through five years, there were 432 cases in which "secondary" failure occurred (p. 1). This means that after a beginning success with the drug for at least one month, later dosage was unsuccessful.

Asthmatics Beware

Many asthmatics are accustomed to inhaling large volumes of epinephrine in a squeeze-bulb apparatus for sale in drug stores. This might cause blood circulation to collapse, the question and answers section of *JAMA* warned in reply to a question by a physician (p. 67). Some asthmatics have inhaled as much as 500 breaths in 10 minutes during severe attacks. Safety depends on the individual capacity and the concentration of epinephrine used by the patient.

• *Science News Letter*, 82:45 July 21, 1962

SEISMOLOGY

Huge Land Masses Travel Hundreds of Miles

► **HUGE CHUNKS** of land, hundreds of miles long, are slowly moving along great tears in the earth's surface.

This phenomenon, which takes place so slowly one would not notice it even if he stood in one place during a lifetime, occurs in countries bordering the Pacific. Land along the most famous tear, or fault, known as the San Andreas fault in California moves about one foot every six years.

The moving blocks of land and faults occur along the Pacific border, often called the "ring of fire." Here are most of the world's active volcanoes and rumbling earthquakes.

Dr. Clarence Allen of the California Institute of Technology, who has just completed a study of major faults in New Zealand, Philippines, Formosa and Chile, said that movement along the San Andreas fault is far from unique. The subtle horizontal movement, though less spectacular than the vertical land thrusts, is more prevalent.

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The Gulf of California represents a *crack* in the surface of the earth that goes more than 30 miles deep and was formed by the drift of Baja California and southern California away from the Mexican mainland.

One-half to three-quarters of fatal athletic injuries involve the head and neck.

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