

MEDICINE

Doctors Are Reading—

Drug Causes Eye Cataracts

► A DRUG called Mer-29, given to reduce cholesterol and now under investigation by a Federal grand jury, can cause eye cataracts, two Seattle physicians reported in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 181:339, 1962.

Cholesterol deposited in the arteries is believed by many doctors to be responsible for hardening of the arteries, or arteriosclerosis. Mer-29, or triparanol, lowers the level of cholesterol in blood by decreasing the body's manufacture of this fatty substance.

The Federal grand jury was called to determine whether false statements had been made in connection with a new drug application. Besides cataracts, the reported side effects include loss of hair and itchy skin.

Drs. Robert C. Laughlin and Thomas F. Carey of Seattle reported that two of their patients developed cataracts after they had been taking triparanol but who had discontinued its use shortly before the cataracts developed. Mer-29 was placed on the market in April, 1960, and withdrawn in April, 1962.

SPACE

"Spies-in-Sky" Guard U.S.

► "SPY-IN-THE-SKY" satellites, now in orbit, are insurance for the United States against an atom-bomb space age Pearl Harbor.

These, as well as recent improvements in seismic detection capability, are providing scientific, if not political, justification for modification of U.S. requirements for on-site inspection as part of any disarmament or nuclear test ban treaty with the Russians.

The U.S. space watchmen are equipped for photo reconnaissance. By means of infrared detectors, they also can "see" atomic tests and missile firings and can protect the U.S. against surprise attack by instantly flashing warning signals. A completely operational detection and warning system of satellites originally planned for the end of this year or early in 1963 has been delayed by technical difficulties, SCIENCE SERVICE learned.

The guardian satellites now watching over the earth from space are among the "classified" Air Force vehicles launched at an increasingly accelerated rate since the successful orbit of MIDAS II (Missile Defense Alarm System) on May 24, 1960. At least eight such classified launchings have been announced since May 22 of this year. Since last December, the Department of Defense has limited information concerning these launches to naming the type of booster used.

In addition to MIDAS, the Air Force has sent aloft SAMOS (Satellite and Missile Observatory Systems) and Discoverer satellites. According to data from the National

Heart Massage Complications

The much-heralded method of massaging the heart from outside the chest to start it again can sometimes cause complications (p. 337). Dr. Dean T. Clark of the Stanford University School of Medicine, Palo Alto, Calif., reported on 19 cases of injuries caused by closed-chest cardiac massage found at autopsies revealed. He said several of the complications were caused by improper techniques.

Mass Vaccination for Polio

Live oral polio virus vaccine prevented what appeared to be "an epidemic of some substantial size" in Atlanta last summer. During the epidemic-prevention program, first of its kind, more than 285,000 children from six months to 15 years of age were given Type-3 Sabin live vaccine in sugar cubes within one week. The "bold decision" to conduct the mass vaccination program appears to have been justified, Drs. Henry M. Gelfand, Alfonso H. Holguin and Roger A. Feldman of the U.S. Public Health Service's Communicable Disease Center, Atlanta, reported (p. 281).

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Aeronautics and Space Administration, the Discoverer probes have been designed "probably to measure effects of nuclear tests." A routine report issued by NASA contains this and other information about the secret spy satellites not available from the DOD.

The DOD secrecy about these satellites is calculated to avoid Russian protests, such as that which followed the U-2 airplane incidents, that their air space is being invaded for espionage purposes. There have been no protests thus far from the Soviet Union.

One reason for this silence, it is suspected, is that the six Cosmos satellites they have launched this year are counterparts of U.S. MIDAS and SAMOS.

East-West space spy systems that would make it impossible to conceal arms secrets on earth might, some observers believe, lead ultimately to a meaningful and peaceful co-existence. It would minimize the chance of a military strike by either country based on erroneous assumptions of retaliatory strength.

They also could guard against the secret transfer of weapons and delivery systems outlawed on earth to orbiting stations in space.

Air Force General Bernard A. Schriever, who is responsible for the development of U. S. passive military spy systems in space, recently told a House Operations Subcommittee that he would not recommend research and development on active space weapons at the present time.

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Do You Know?

Air pollution control now includes workers in the fields of medicine, space instrumentation, industrial hygiene, environmental control, chemical warfare and urban air pollution control.

Both American and European species of eels spawn in the same ocean area and for a time the larvae travel together in the Gulf Stream, yet no American eel has ever been recorded in Europe or a European eel in North America.

Bats are among the most numerous of land vertebrates with nearly 1,000 species throughout the world.

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