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PUBLIC HEALTH

FDA Probes Popular Drug

► **GROSS DEFORMITIES** have been found in the offspring of rats which, when pregnant, were injected with Bonine, a popular non-prescription drug used by American women for dizziness and nausea.

The Food and Drug Administration has Bonine "under active investigation," after hearing results of the rat experiment conducted by Dr. C. T. G. King of the National Institutes of Health.

Dr. King reported that 130 rats born to mothers which had received Bonine during pregnancy showed malformations such as cleft palates, receded lower jaws, small mouths, short limbs and bones that failed to calcify.

Bonine, varieties of which have been sold for the past eight years under the names of Bonadette and Bonamine, is also popular as a reliever of motion sickness. A jar of 100 Bonine tablets sells for about \$11. Its chemical name is meclizine hydrochloride.

An FDA official said meclizine hydrochloride recently was ordered off the open drug shelves in Sweden for fear that it might have a relation to abnormalities in human babies.

Meanwhile, officials of Chas. Pfizer and Co., Inc., makers of Bonine, Bonadette and

Bonamine, said their medical staff had reviewed Dr. King's data and all other published information on meclizine and concluded "the drug has not been shown to cause fetal damage in humans."

They referred to a remark made by Dr. Widukind Lenz, director of the Institute of Human Genetics at Hamburg, Germany. Dr. Lenz performed the work that revealed the drug thalidomide had caused the tragic outbreak of deformities in European babies.

Speaking before the International Conference on Congenital Malformations in New York, Dr. Lenz said:

"We have been very fortunate that most drugs given to pregnant women seem to be completely innocuous to the embryo. One of the best recorded examples is the antiemetic (anti-nausea drug) meclizine which has been given to millions of women without apparent ill effects to the embryo."

Dr. King described his experiment in Science, 141:353, 1963.

He said the greatest number of malformations occurred in rats injected with relatively large doses of pulverized Bonine during the 12th to 15th days of gestation.

• Science News Letter, 84:94 Aug. 10, 1963

OCEANOGRAPHY

Navy Deep in Sea Studies

► **MILITARY NEEDS**, especially in underwater warfare, dominate America's plans for greater and deeper exploration of the oceans during the next ten years, the White House announced.

The President's Office of Science and Technology predicted that funding for oceanographic research, now \$124 million a year, would more than double by 1972.

The total for the period would be \$2.3 billion. Ten years ago \$10 million was spent for oceanography.

It said the number of research and survey ships would grow from 76 to 128 and the number of scientists and engineers now studying the seas go from 2,700 to more than 6,000.

Yearly money requests to Congress for ocean studies will be based on the plans, which were prepared by the Interagency Committee on Oceanography. Problems to be tackled over the next ten years involve both applied and basic research.

Applied problems include detection of submarines, production of coastal and deep sea charts for navigation, safe disposal of radioactive wastes, increase of commercial fish catches, prediction of sea conditions for economic routing of ships and improvement of weather forecasts.

Basic research problems include understanding of the seas' deep circulation, origin of underwater trenches and seamounts, dynamic processes that drive the ocean cur-

rents, fertility of the sea, the complex air-sea interaction and relationship of marine organisms to their environment.

Major support during the next ten years is expected from the Navy with 36% of the funding; National Science Foundation with 22%; Bureau of Commercial Fisheries, 15%, and Coast and Geodetic Survey, 12%. Private laboratories and universities are expected to do most of the ocean research.

Among the needed fleet of research vessels are six to eight submarines for exploring the depths from a few to 18,000 feet, and one designed for 36,000 feet.

About 12 new major government oceanographic laboratories and facilities were called for, plus underwater experimental installations for mining on the continental shelves.

The Navy is particularly interested in knowledge that can be applied to anti-submarine warfare. Its work will center on audibility problems, since sound is the only form of energy that travels any distance in the sea.

Detecting a submarine by underwater listening gear in various operating areas during different seasons of the year depends on a variety of factors that need much study.

"Everything we learn about how to hide our Polaris boats from enemy detection," the report said, "contributes to our knowledge of how best to go about finding his."

• Science News Letter, 84:94 Aug. 10, 1963