

Medicine Still Hunting Cause of "Flu"

Bacteriology

Experiments Indicate That it May Not Be a Bacillus

IN spite of considerable effort to find the causal agent of epidemic influenza, the present time finds the problem still unsolved, Dr. Peter K. Olitsky of the Rockefeller Institute for Medical Research said in a De LaMar lecture which he gave at the Johns Hopkins School of Hygiene and Public Health.

There are several factors which contribute to the existing confusion and the outstanding difficulty arises from

the necessity of selecting cases of undoubted acute influenza, Dr. Olitsky stated. There has been in the past frequent failure to recognize influenza as a specific, primary disease, and physicians and other scientists have failed frequently to consider as secondary infections the various bacterial pneumonias that develop in lungs injured by the influenzal agent.

Moreover the primary uncomplicated disease is usually mild and tran-

sitory; so that unless the cause is sought in the early hours it may become masked or even supplanted by associated organisms. Also, the rapid and extensive spread of influenza during pandemics makes it difficult to select for control observation cases of perfectly healthy individuals who have never suffered from the disease. Finally, to add to the confusion, a clear clinical distinction has not always been made between primary, uncomplicated epidemic influenza and many different types of upper respiratory infections, such as common colds, acute rhinitis, acute bronchitis and other indefinite conditions which may stimulate a true influenzal attack.

Dr. Olitsky discussed three different agents which have been thought to cause influenza. Pfeiffer's bacilli have not yet been universally accepted as the causative agent, although there is considerable evidence to show that these organisms have some relationship to the cause of the disease, Dr. Olitsky said. The same holds true for streptococci which have been implicated by several investigators since 1917, and most recently by Dr. I. S. Falk, formerly of the University of Chicago.

Some investigators believe that the cause of influenza is a filterable virus free from bacteria of the ordinary species, or bacteria which can be cultivated artificially. Here again additional experimental evidence is necessary before conclusion may be reached.

Dr. Olitsky and his colleague, Dr. F. L. Gates, have been studying the *Bacterium pneumosintes*. These are filter-passing bacteria found in the nasopharynx of man. There are now reported in the literature at least 30 groups of pneumosintes-like organisms mostly isolated by Drs. Olitsky and Gates and by workers studying in their laboratories. Dr. Olitsky drew attention to the fact that this germ was obtained only from cases of influenza. While there has been confirmation now and again of the occurrence of this filter-passing organism in influenza and not in other conditions, Dr. Olitsky said that he and Dr. Gates still maintain the cautious attitude they have previously expressed and prefer merely to present the experimental facts.

Government Test for Schools

Employment Psychology

A PSYCHOLOGICAL project which will personally affect the careers of thousands of boys and girls in the schools of this country is very soon to be put into effect, Dr. L. J. O'Rourke, Director of Research of the United States Civil Service Commission, reported. Dr. O'Rourke addressed a group of directors of research representing school systems throughout the country.

The federal government has joined hands with public school officials and industrial concerns in an effort to improve selection and placement procedures, and to prevent boys and girls from making false starts in finding satisfactory employment, thus lessening the number of misfits and cutting down an enormous economic loss, Dr. O'Rourke indicated.

A first installment of employment tests, now being perfected, will be released to high schools and colleges of the country in a few months, he stated. These first tests deal with stenography, typing, spelling, grammar, and judgment. The tests will be used to determine the standards of ability which boys and girls who plan to enter office work must expect to reach. Later, tests for other occupations will be released.

"Results of the tests," Dr. O'Rourke explained, "will tell the pupil, as long before graduation as desired, to what extent he is prepared to meet actual employment conditions in industry or Government. A prospective stenographer may learn, for example, that her stenographic speed is superior to that of 75 per cent. of stenographers in actual employment, but that her ability to use English is below that of 80 per cent. of successful stenographers. Information concerning her

standing is an incentive when it is received by the student six months before the completion of her course; it may be depressing when it is received, as at present, at the employment office or on the job.

"The use of the standardized tests will make it possible for school vocational directors to recommend students in terms that will be meaningful to employers. Instead of using the vague terms of recommendation that are most common at present, they can tell an employer definitely that a certain girl has greater proficiency than 80 per cent. of the typists already in his employ."

Almost fifty industrial concerns, employing thousands of office workers, have already offered their cooperation with the project, the first ever started to bring together all the people concerned in this great problem of employment. Committees made up of outstanding educators and industrial leaders will aid in furthering the project.

Within perhaps a year, students will be provided with a sheet known as a guidance card, which will enable them to check up their ratings on the tests with the requirements for a great variety of positions. The Civil Service Commission is especially interested in this phase of the project, which will bring to the government service a more select roster of candidates, eliminating many who can foresee for themselves that they would not be successful in meeting government requirements. The guidance card will also work to prevent promising young people from entering fields where there is too little opportunity.

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