

## PUBLIC HEALTH

**Meningitis Increasing Fast in United States**

A STEADY increase in cases of meningitis, with no signs of any let-up, is worrying health officers all over the country. Health authorities do not like to hazard any predictions but they believe cases of the disease will continue to increase.

The increase seems to have started just a year ago. Reports from state health officers to the U. S. Public Health Service show that the number of cases in the country last year were more than double the number for the preceding year. Reports for the current year indicate that there are now double the number there were last year.

Latest figures available are for the week ending Feb. 29, 1936. There were 307 cases during that week. The cumulative figures are impressive. For the first six weeks of 1935 there were 539 cases, and for the first six weeks of 1936 there have been 998 cases. The total number of cases in 1935 was 5,583. The total in 1934 was only 2,295. At the same rate, there will be over 10,000 cases during the current year.

The meningitis now so prevalent in the country is caused by a "germ" called the meningococcus. There is a serum for use in treating the disease which is fairly successful. Preventing the disease, however, seems to depend on isolating the patients and on avoiding crowded living conditions, especially crowded sleeping quarters.

**Starts With Chill**

The disease starts very suddenly with a severe chill, headache, fever, explosive vomiting and finally stiffening of the neck. A physician should be called at once and his advice acted on immediately.

Most people, fortunately, are not susceptible to the disease, but an unfortunate feature is the fact that these insusceptible persons can carry the germs without knowing it and it is in this way, chiefly, that the disease spreads.

Control of meningitis, Dr. Adolph Weinzirl of the Baltimore City Health Department says, is probably a matter of remedying economic conditions responsible for large numbers of persons living and sleeping under very overcrowded conditions.

No one knows why the disease has increased so markedly in the last year.

*Science News Letter, March 14, 1936*

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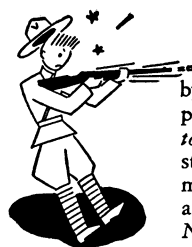
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