

## SCIENCE NEWS

*Science Service, Washington, D. C.*

## THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE AMERICAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION

THE importance to the public of medical education was stressed by two presidents of the American Medical Association at its annual meeting held in Atlantic City during the past week. Dr. Charles Gordon Heyd, New York, president of the association during the past year, stated that "The quality of medical services depends on medical education." "Our best argument against the establishment of foreign schemes of socialized medicine is continued maintenance of the high plane of medical practice in this country," said Dr. J. H. J. Upham, Columbus, Ohio, who was installed at the meeting as president for the coming year. The messages of these two medical leaders was that the most important way to provide adequate medical care for the public is for physicians to keep themselves posted on latest medical discoveries and to be prepared to apply them in treating their patients. Three ways of doing this were outlined by Dr. Upham. These are constant improvement of the training of young doctors in medical schools and hospitals; meetings of doctors and medical scientists, such as the present meeting, and the other hundreds of medical meetings held every year in the United States, and postgraduate courses for practicing physicians, especially those far from medical centers. Dr. Upham suggested the establishment of required periodic examinations every 5 or 10 years to determine which physicians had kept up with advances in medical knowledge and were therefore entitled to have their licenses to practice renewed.

DR. HEYD stated that the doctor of the future will need to be well educated and in close personal touch with his patients because he will be treating entirely different kinds of ailments. The day of mass methods in medicine, by which diseases like typhoid fever, diphtheria, syphilis and malaria can be controlled, is going out. With these old plagues under control, and with more and more of the population in the older age brackets, the important diseases of the future will be the degenerative diseases of old age, such as heart and kidney disease, cancer, pneumonia and apoplexy. "Medical practice," Dr. Heyd said, "will require a more personal service, a more extensive control, and, I believe, will require physicians." Dr. Heyd said it is a fallacy to assume "that all people at all times under all conditions can receive what is so glibly spoken of as 'adequate medical service' or even as 'the best of medical care.' It is impossible to make people of ordinary average intelligence look after themselves. It is notorious that there is more delayed medical attention among employees and non-professional staffs of hospitals than those outside the hospital field. The final analysis of the social intelligence of a people will rest on their health program. Wherever we survey a typical death-producing disease and its effect on the community, we find that the record of the United States is superior to that in countries with either a socialized medical system or compulsory health insurance. The final appraisal of our national well-being will rest on mortality statistics."

DR. ALPHONSE R. DOCHEZ, of New York, reported that progress is being made in the attack on the common cold and influenza. The virus which causes the common cold can now be produced and preserved in unlimited amounts. This made possible attempts at vaccinating against the ailment. These vaccinations failed to protect the subjects from colds, for some unknown reason. Further modification of the technique should result in success. Attempts to establish immunity against influenza by similar methods have been somewhat more successful, Dr. Dochez said, referring to previous reports of this research. It is obvious, he concluded, that the problems studied are as yet remote from practical solution. Nevertheless, it seems fair to assert that a certain amount of progress has been made—that light has been shed on complex mechanisms and that methods have been developed which may have future value.

DR. WILLIAM J. EZICKSON AND JACOB B. FELDMAN, of Philadelphia, reported that kidney stones and lack of vitamin A in the diet go together, but the lack of the vitamin is apparently not the cause of the kidney condition. The trouble seems to be that the patient eats enough of the vitamin but for some reason his body can not assimilate it, and it is possible that this same defect of assimilation has something to do with the formation of kidney stones.

DR. EDMUND P. FOWLER, New York, reported that loud sounds are better than faint ones for detecting and measuring degrees of deafness. One reason is that the ear is accustomed to listen to fairly loud sounds, in fact must listen, while faint sounds are usually ignored. There is a greater sensation of loudness in the deafened ear than has been suspected. This is why persons with noticeable loss of hearing for faint or distant sounds can hear conversation at close range as well as those with normal hearing. Dr. Fowler explained that faint sounds stimulate only a few of the nerve fibers that carry impulses to the central nervous system through which we hear. Moreover, if the stimulus is weak, the impulses are weak and slow. With an increase in the stimulus, as in loud noises, both the number of fibers acting and the frequency of the impulses are increased and the nervous system receives a greater number of impulses per unit of time. In spite of defects in the nerve mechanism, the deaf ear sends almost as many impulses to the brain as does the good ear. This phenomenon is of particular value in differentiating nerve deafness from other types. It is also an aid in prescribing hearing aids for those having this kind of deafness.

A NEW way of taking x-ray pictures, which will give a more accurate picture of the interior of the body than heretofore, was shown by Dr. Robert H. Millwee, of Dallas, Texas. Instead of letting the x-rays spread out from a central point, Dr. Millwee has developed a method of taking x-ray pictures with a sheet of rays all in line. Roentgen slit scanography is the name given the new method. Developed in order to get pictures of the

spine free from the distortions of the usual x-ray pictures, Dr. Millwee has found that this method gives a new view of the heart which may be useful in detecting early signs of one kind of heart disease.

A NEW hormone, lipocaic, which is a sort of twin sister to insulin, was described by its discoverers, Drs. Lester R. Dragstedt and John Van Prohaska, of the University of Chicago. Like insulin, lipocaic comes from the pancreas and, like insulin, it is indispensable for life. But where insulin controls the body's use of sugar, lipocaic apparently controls the use of fat. Judging from its effects on animals, it may prove a useful supplement to insulin in the treatment of diabetes.

NEW slow-action insulins have been compared with standard insulin and crystalline insulin in research by Drs. Hugo Freund, of Harper Hospital, Detroit, and Samuel S. Altschuler, of Eloise, Mich., who reported their findings at the meeting.

ULTRA-VIOLET rays from the sun have been used to sterilize the air of operating rooms and are suggested as a way to prevent the common cold, since experiments at the Harvard School of Public Health have shown that these rays can kill the cold germs growing in a special tank. Demonstrations of these researches by Dr. Deryl Hart, Duke University, and Drs. W. F. Wells and Mildred Weeks Wells, of Harvard University, were given.

THAT teeth, like trees, have rings which show the processes of growth and the health experiences of their possessors has been found by Dr. Isaac Schour, of the University of Illinois. He showed these microscopically fine markings, including the one made at birth and called the birth ring.

THE discovery that jaundice temporarily checks the progress of chronic deforming arthritis, suggests that this most crippling and disabling of all forms of chronic rheumatism can no longer be regarded as a relentlessly progressive, uncontrollable disease for which no really satisfactory remedy need be expected, according to Dr. Philip S. Hench, of the Mayo Clinic, Rochester, Minn., who spoke to the American Association for the Study and Control of Rheumatic Diseases, meeting with the American Medical Association.

GROUP hospital insurance, now in effect in many parts of the country, as a first step toward state medicine, was discussed at the opening of the meetings. The warning appeared in a report by the bureau of medical economics of the association, which has been studying this and related problems. The danger, according to the report, lies in the fact that hospital contracts under these insurance plans can not be limited to essential hospital services but must include medical services, such as anesthesia, clinical laboratory diagnostic tests, x-rays and radium treatments and physical therapy. While the general public may not see danger in state medicine, the report points out two other dangers in group hospital plans that are easily seen to concern the man in the street. One is that group hospitalization is actually a form of insurance coverage, "yet actuarial data on which to base

sound premium rates are not available." The second danger is that group hospitalization plans are getting away from the original altruistic purpose of assisting persons of limited means to secure necessary hospital service and are being used as devices to fill vacant hospital beds and augment hospital income. A post-payment plan for those really unable to pay their hospital bills, instead of the insurance prepayment plans, was recommended by the bureau. Medical societies in some communities have developed this kind of plan with an administration cost of about 10 per cent., whereas the administration of group hospitalization plans costs from 12 to 40 per cent. Reports that many counties in the United States are without medical service were found to be exaggerated. Only 19 counties without any physician and in each of 233 one doctor to every 2,000 population were found by the bureau. The general ratio of physicians to population in the United States is about 1 to 750 persons.—JANE STAFFORD.

### ITEMS

ONE of the greatest hoards of prehistoric Indian corn ever found in the Mississippi Valley is reported by Robert McCormick Adams, excavating an old Indian settlement at Wickliffe, Ky. Several thousand grains of the corn, charred by fire, were found under the floor of an Indian building near the fireplace. Fire, which wrecked the whole structure, may explain why the Indian store of food was never eaten. Skeletal remains of Indians who lived at the prehistoric settlement are also coming to light in the excavations.

So cat-like was an early sabertooth animal that only an examination of the internal tooth structure proved it to be a counterfeit cat. Professor William Berryman Scott, of Princeton, has given it a name from the Greek, which means just that: "apat," meaning false or counterfeit, and "aelurus," meaning cat, combine into *Apataelurus*. The creature, which lived in early Eocene time, belonged to the animal group known as creodonts, a primitive, quite generalized carnivorous type. One line of descent of these creodonts independently acquired the characteristics of the true sabertooth tiger. The fossil on which Dr. Scott's identification was based was found in Utah by J. Leroy Kay, of the Carnegie Museum, Pittsburgh. In recognition of this, Dr. Scott has given it the specific name *kayi*, so that its whole name is *Apataelurus kayi*.

POSSIBILITY of conquering gonorrhea by a new chemical treatment appears in the report of Drs. John E. Dees and J. A. C. Colston, of the Johns Hopkins Hospital, Baltimore, to the American Medical Association. Sixteen out of nineteen patients were cured by treatment with sulfanilamide. In all but two of these recovery occurred within less than a week. The treatment is still in the experimental stage, but the results obtained together with the reduction in hospital expenses for previously used methods of treating this wide-spread condition are impressive. Careful use of sulfanilamine in clinics where large numbers of gonorrhea patients can be closely watched so that accurate evaluation of the treatment can be made is recommended.