Comments and Communications

Directory of Latin-American Scientific Institutions

During the eight years that the Committee on Inter-American Scientific Publications has been in operation a large amount of information has been accumulated on the academies, universities, scientific societies, and other scientific institutions, both private and governmental, for all of the Latin-American countries. The readers of *Science* may be interested to know that with the aid of a small grant from the Pan-American Union this material is now being assembled into a Directory, which will be available in printed form later this year. We have had the assistance of prominent scientists as editorial advisers in each country; consequently, it has been possible to report in considerable detail on the structure of the faculties of the leading universities.

A report on the history and general activities of the Inter-American Committee is in preparation.

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Direct-writing Instruments for Radiocardiography

In Prinzmetal's article on radiocardiography (*Science.* September 24, 1948, p. 340) mention is made of a direct-writing counter used in this work; however, there is no description of the apparatus per se. In no article, nor in conversation with members of the Instrumentation Branch of the AEC, have we been able to find adequate descriptions of such apparatus.

We have devised direct-writing instruments that are very suitable for this work and are only adaptations of standard laboratory instruments. Anyone interested in radiocardiography may in this short note find some helpful hints for his own use.

Any counting-rate meter type monitoring instrument can probably be used in direct-writing counters. In our laboratory the Victoreen model 263A has been adapted because it happened to be on hand. All that is necessary is that leads be attached to each side of the meter. These leads are then attached to a linear potentiometer, and a portion of the voltage across the potentiometer is fed into the ink-writing or photographing instrument used. We have fed a portion of this voltage into a portable electrocardiograph and into a viseocardiette, obtaining excellent tracings. The only precautions necessary are that the potentiometer have high impedance in proportion to the meter of the monitoring instrument so that most of the current flows through the meter (we use a ratio of approximately 1000: 1) and that only a fraction of the voltage across the potentiometer be used to activate the ECG string or wire. The response of the ECG is linearly proportional to the meter of the monitor over the whole meter range. The moderate sensitivity range of the monitor is best for use with all writing instruments we have used.

We have recently used the same monitor in conjunction with a standard d-c amplifier and ink-writing oscillograph. In this case the leads were set directly into the amplifier input without interposition of the potentiometer. Again the moderate sensitivity range was most desirable. Response of the pen was certainly adequate. Slow speed on the paper feed gave best results.

Any such setup as has been described has some of the following advantages: (1) availability of the parts used; (2) easy adaptability of the instruments; and (3) the use of multichannel ECG machines and ink-writing oscilloscopes, which allows simultaneous determination of results with variation in placement of GM tubes over the precordium and with simultaneous standard ECG records using one pair of leads to the multichannel instrument. (The multichannel oscilloscope needs a pre-amplifier ahead of one d-c amplifier to allow ECG's to be made.)

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The Highest Laboratory in the World

In the November 5, 1948, issue of *Science,* under News and Notes (p. 498) the following statement appeared.

"The highest laboratory in the world, situated on the summit of Mt. Evans, Colorado, at an elevation of 14,156 feet, is currently being used. . . ."

I thought it would be of interest to the readers of *Science* to mention that the highest laboratory in the world is located in Morococha, Peru (a mining town of about 4,000 inhabitants) at an altitude of 14,900 feet. This laboratory belongs to the Institute of Andean Biology, Faculty of Medicine of Lima, and it is used for physiological and clinical investigations relating to the influence of a low pressure environment. At the present time a new and larger building is being completed.

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A Suggested Contraction for "Desoxyribonucleic Acid"

I have listened to numerous lectures in which the speaker mouthed the 10-syllabled "desoxyribonucleic acid" from 5 to 25 times. Such terms as "dopa" and "paba" are in common use by scientists. Why, then, could we not designate this important nuclear constituent by the simple and euphonious contraction "*dorna*?"

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[1] Now visiting medical centers in this country at the invitation of The Rockefeller Foundation.