

industry and by physicians who contribute to the fund through the American Medical Education Foundation. The AMA annually gives a direct contribution to the foundation.

During 1954-55, completed construction by medical schools had a value of more than \$99 million and construction initiated had a value of more than \$80 million. In addition, many hospital and clinic facilities used in teaching were financed by Government or private funds and not by the schools.

Among other items discussed in the report, which appeared in the 8 Oct. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, are the following:

There are 251 faculty vacancies reported for the 1955-56 session—seven less than in 1954-55. In view of the new schools and new faculty appointments, this slight improvement is perhaps more significant than it appears, the report said.

There were 1537 women attending medical school. This was a slight increase over the previous year. The 345 women graduates was the smallest number since 1947.

The year also witnessed the largest recorded attendance—105,466—at 1719 short courses, conferences, assemblies, seminars, and study and circuit courses for practicing physicians who wished to obtain additional training.

## News Briefs

■ Electric wiring exposed for long periods of time to atomic rays from nuclear power may show various effects. In some types the insulation will break down, whereas others will show no ill effects, and some varieties will even improve. These observations were described by P. H. Klein and Clifford Mannal of the General Electric Company in a report delivered at the recent meeting in Chicago of the American Institute of Electrical Engineers.

For doses up to  $10^8$  roentgens, polyethylene tape and Formex wire enamel undergo discernible decreases in their resistance to short-time voltage breakdown. Cellulose acetate shows little change under the same conditions, and polyvinyl chloride shows some distinctly favorable alterations after irradiation. Mica-and-glass tape impregnated with silicone resin—an inorganic insulator—is virtually unaffected, even at radiation levels up to  $10^{10}$  roentgens.

■ It is hoped that Britain's rabbit population, which was once 100 million, will be reduced to 3 million next year with the continued spread of the rabbit disease, myxomatosis, across the country. Derick H. Amory, Minister of Agricul-

ture, has reported that since the disease took hold 2 years ago, the grazing season has been lengthened considerably, and crop yields in some places have been increased by 50 percent. He estimates that farmers have been saved approximately \$42 million a year.

It is also reported that a strain of myxomatosis-resistant rabbits has appeared in an area of Nottinghamshire. Efforts are now being made to wipe them out.

■ A central laboratory building at Suffield Experimental Station, Suffield, Alberta, Canada, opened officially on 29 Sept. Facilities of the 1000-square-mile establishment, the Defence Research Board's largest station, are employed for experimental activities related to the defensive aspects of biological, chemical and radiological warfare. The staff scientists work closely with the Canadian Armed Forces and colleagues in the same fields in the United Kingdom and the United States.

The laboratory also accommodates station headquarters, the scientific administrative staff, a Canadian Army liaison office, a library, and other auxiliary services associated with the establishment's program. A conference room and a projection room will be used extensively for scientific discussions and films of trials and research and development techniques.

The \$1.5 million building contains a diversified range of scientific installations. One is an electron microscope with a magnification of 20,000. In a nearby building associated with the central laboratory is a 2-million-electron-volt Van de Graaff generator.

■ Discovery of a new antibiotic in an organism obtained from East Pakistan earth was announced in the 1 Oct. issue of *Nature* by K. Ahmad and M. F. Islam of the University of Dacca, East Pakistan. The antibiotic has been named *ramnacin* after the place, Ramna, where the organism producing it was discovered. This organism is a *Streptomyces*. *Ramnacin* is a stable antibiotic showing activity against a number of bacteria, including some staphylococcus and streptococcus germs and two fungi.

■ Recently a Japanese seismologist, Takahiro Hagiwara, pointed out on his return from a 2-year UNESCO mission in Turkey that it may be possible to forecast earthquakes. Working under the UNESCO Technical Assistance Program, Hagiwara cooperated with the Turkish Government in establishing a Seismological Institute at Istanbul and three earthquake observation stations in other parts of Turkey, which is struck by earthquakes on an average of once a

year. By correlating reports from these stations and from others all over the world, Hagiwara observed that it might be possible "to find a method of forecasting earthquakes so that people can be warned in time . . ."

The international cooperation that is required if earthquakes are to be understood, and perhaps forecast, is exemplified by the UNESCO project in Turkey. G. Gutenberg of California was in charge of the preliminary survey; preceding Hagiwara in Turkey were F. J. Roesli of Switzerland and M. Gaston Grenet of France.

■ Hormones circulating in the body of an expectant mother can cross into the unborn baby's body and there affect the baby's organs. This finding, which is contrary to current belief, was announced by William B. Ober, Charles C. Roby, Jay Bernstein and James E. Drorbaugh of Boston Lying-In Hospital at the recent meeting in Boston of the American Society of Clinical Pathologists.

■ After the Atomic Energy Commission turned over 961 papers on possible industrial uses of atomic energy to the Commerce Department's Office of Technical Services, sales by the office jumped about 400 percent.

## Scientists in the News

ROBERT G. SPROUL was honored for his 25 years as president of the University of California with a Symposium on the Physical and Earth Sciences that was held 17-19 Oct. on the Berkeley campus as part of a state-wide commemoration of the anniversary.

It was during this symposium that Ernest O. Lawrence, Nobel laureate, inventor of the cyclotron, and director of the university's Radiation Laboratory, announced the discovery of a new atomic particle, the antiproton.

ELIZABETH L. HAZEN, microbiologist, and RACHEL BROWN, biochemist, of the division of laboratories and research of the New York State Department of Health, have received the \$5000 Squibb award in chemotherapy for their discovery of nystatin, the first antifungal antibiotic safe enough for human use. The microorganism that produces nystatin was found by Hazen in a soil sample obtained from a farm near Warrenton, Va. The isolation of the active drug was carried out by Brown.

The discovery of nystatin resulted from a search started in 1946. Although many scientists were then screening soil samples for microorganisms possessing antibiotic activity, few, if any, were concentrating on antifungal agents.