News of Science

International Committee on Laboratory Animals

The world demand for laboratory animals continues to increase enormously, especially for specialized strains and for animals of uniformly high quality. Unless proper steps are taken, it is certain that progress in experimental biology and medicine will be delayed or hindered. In addition to the many national problems of laboratory animal supply and use, there are many of a universal nature which could best be solved on a coordinated international basis.

Consultants on laboratory animals who were convened by UNESCO in Paris last December recommended formation of an International Committee on Laboratory Animals. Such a committee was established under the auspices of the International Union of Biological Sciences (IUBS), UNESCO, and the Council for International Organizations of Medical Sciences (CIOMS), which includes the International Union of Physiological Sciences, the International Union of Biochemistry, and the International Union against Cancer. The new committee was formed from a reorganization of a Committee on Laboratory Animals that IUBS established in Rome in April 1955, and from a program established by UNESCO based on recommendations of the Cell Biology Program of CIOMS in December 1955.

The International Committee on Laboratory Animals consists of: a representative of IUBS, Sven O. Hörstadius, president of IUBS, chairman of the committee; W. Lane-Petter, director, Laboratory Animals Bureau, Medical Research Council, United Kingdom, honorary executive secretary of the committee; M. M. Sabourdy, director, Centre de Selection des Animaux de Laboratoire, Centre National de la Récherche Scientifique, France; Dale W. Jenkins, chairman, Institute of Laboratory Animal Resources, National Academy of Sciences–National Research Council, U.S.A.; a representative of CIOMS, to be appointed; and a representative of UNESCO, to be appointed.

At present, the committee is surveying laboratory animal sources and utilization in the United Kingdom, the Benelux countries, France, Italy, and Scandinavia, including Finland and Iceland. Additional countries will be surveyed in the near future. The committee is patterning its activities on an international scale after the programs of the Institute of Laboratory Animal Resources of the NAS–NRC (U.S.A.) and the Laboratory Animals Bureau of the Medical Research Council (U.K.). It is attempting to stimulate formation of similar organizations in other countries.

The aims of this international committee are to insure adequate supplies of uniform, high-quality laboratory animals and to determine the action required to prevent any serious shortages from arising. A world list of strains of laboratory animals is being compiled and a documentation center will be established. The common terms used in relation to laboratory animals are being defined precisely and quantitatively with regard to genetics, disease and parasitism, nutrition, care, and performance records. These terms will be standardized on an international basis.

The committee will prepare a report on the customs, quarantine, and other regulations concerning international shipment of laboratory animals, and formulate recommendations for proper conditions of transportation. The committee will also determine the need for establishing an information exchange; an educational program for animal technicians and caretakers; internationally recognized standards for laboratory animals, and systems for certifying animals and for accrediting of suppliers.

Johns Hopkins

The Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine has announced an extensively revised program of medical education that will cut 2 years off training time for specially selected students and 1 year for all other students. A total of $10 million to finance the plan has been received from the Rockefeller Foundation, the Ford Foundation, the Commonwealth Fund, the U.S. Public Health Service, and various private sources.

The money will provide for the construction of a new basic-science building at the medical school and the support of additional faculty. The plan will probably be put into effect on completion of the building in the fall of 1959.

The objectives of the new program have been stated as follows: (i) to shorten the formal education of physicians without sacrificing quality of training; (ii) to overcome the barrier between the liberal arts and medical sciences by enabling students in medical school to continue studies in the humanities and social sciences; (iii) to encourage more students to enter careers in the basic sciences of medicine—such as physiology, anatomy, and pharmacology—where the greatest shortages of teachers and research workers now exist.

Selected candidates of adequate "motivation and maturity" will be permitted to enter medical school as full graduate students after only two years of college, while continuing their college education. Other students may enter after 3 years of college, and still others after the complete 4 years of college.

Those who are accepted after 2 years of college wil take a 5-year course in medical school. They will continue studies in the liberal arts during the first 3 years of medical school, at the end of which they will receive a bachelor of arts degree. Students accepted after 3 or 4 years of college will begin medical school with the second year of the 5-year program. For all students the last year of medical school will be combined with the first year of internship in the Johns Hopkins Hospital, where each student will go through the major clinical services in turn, performing the duties now done by interns.

In addition to the usual 24-hour responsibility for patients, the student will be given a 2-month elective period for special work in basic science or additional clinical training in any one of the various departments of the hospital. He will pay tuition but will receive board and lodging, or their equivalent, in return for services to patients. At the time of graduation each student will have completed not only the required work in medical school but also a year of hospital internship.

While the years of medical training are cut, the actual period of training is shortened relatively little. In certain respects it will be more intensive than at present, for the academic year will be increased from the present 32 weeks to 40 weeks, and in the fifth year the training will cover 50 weeks.

The combined resources of the faculties of medicine, hygiene, and philosophy will become more widely available to graduate students in the basic medical sciences. This factor, combined with the shortened time required for formal education, should enable Hopkins to train an