Clinical and Other Notes.

THE EARLY DIAGNOSIS OF INFECTIVE HEPATITIS IN SYPHILITIC PATIENTS UNDERGOING ARSENICAL THERAPY

BY

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The incidence of infective hepatitis is still greater in syphilitic patients undergoing arsenical therapy than in the general population despite the care taken in V.D. clinics to avoid dissemination of the causal virus. At the present time a diagnosis of hepatitis is seldom made prior to the appearance of bile in the urine although it is recognized that the disease is most infectious in the pre-icteric stage, and the advantages of making a diagnosis at this time are obvious.

Infective hepatitis can be diagnosed readily in the pre-icteric stage by means of the intradermal histamine test of Kline. Unfortunately the usefulness of this test is limited by the fact that early symptoms such as nausea and loss of appetite, which would lead one to perform it, are frequently absent or so slight as to be disregarded by the patient.

In August 1943, when examining records of cases of "arsenical jaundice" it was noted that in the majority of cases a loss of weight occurred shortly before signs of jaundice appeared. During the next two months close attention was paid to the weight of patients on anti-syphilitic treatment, and 13 men were seen who had lost at least 2 lb. in weight in seven days. On the day on which the weight-loss was noted they were examined for signs of hepatitis. The liver was slightly enlarged in 8 cases, and tender in 3 of these. Icterus was not present in any case, and none had bile in the urine. These patients were then examined daily, and in every case bile appeared in the urine from seven to ten days. During this two-month period another 4 patients developed hepatitis. 2 of these became ill while having four weeks' rest from anti-syphilitic treatment, 1 showed a gradual loss of weight over many months, and the remaining case did not lose weight.

It was then decided to carry out Kline's test on patients who lost 2 lb. or more in weight within a week. In the next eighteen months 55 men on anti-syphilitic treatment developed hepatitis. 43 of these showed a significant loss of weight. In these cases the intradermal injection of 0.25 c.c. of 0.1 per cent histamine produced a yellow wheal, and all had bile in the urine seven to ten days later. 6 of the remaining 12 cases developed jaundice during a rest period,
2 lost weight very gradually over many months, while there was no loss of weight in the remaining 4.

The weight lost within a week by the 56 patients in whom a diagnosis of hepatitis was presumed in the pre-icteric stage was as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weight lost</th>
<th>2 lb.</th>
<th>3 lb.</th>
<th>4 lb.</th>
<th>5 lb.</th>
<th>6 lb.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. of patients</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(For convenience oz. have been omitted.)

As has already been stated 8 patients developed jaundice at a time when they were not under weekly observation. If these are disregarded, of a total of 64 patients who developed hepatitis, 56 showed a loss of weight of 2 lb. or more seven to ten days before bile appeared in the urine, and though the number of cases studied is too small to allow a definite conclusion to be drawn, it would appear that syphilitic patients who develop hepatitis while under treatment with the arsenicals, commonly lose 2 lb. or more in weight seven to ten days before bile appears in the urine.

In most V.D. clinics, patients receiving arsenical therapy are weighed weekly, and it is suggested that the use of Kline's test in all cases who show a sudden loss of weight of at least 2 lb., provides an easy and effective method of diagnosing infective hepatitis in the pre-icteric stage.

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**THE PIONEER HEALTH CENTRE, PECKHAM**

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When embarking upon this subject one must understand that, as a result of the research carried out at this centre, a new branch of science has emerged. A recognized name for this does not appear to have been evolved, but a convenient description is, perhaps, "Human Biology."

This experiment that has its base and field at Peckham is concerned not with the study of lower forms of life, as is the academic type of biology, but with man, man's living and his environment. Environment is of equal importance as man himself, in fact the two are inseparable.

The main starting point for the investigations was the contention that health is more than just absence of disease. In the words of an interim report, issued by the centre,1 "Health is a positive quality emergent from the harmonious working of one's non-disease organs." The purpose of the experiment is to study health, and the discovery of disease was purely incidental. Although a great deal of work has been completed, we are still very much on the fringe of this new subject.

The present centre was organized and is staffed by a team of men and women doctors, sociologists, biologists and biochemists, etc. Although it is now or-

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