

THE PUBLIC HEALTH.

THE ANNUAL REPORT OF THE MEDICAL RESEARCH COUNCIL.

The Annual Report of the Medical Research Council for 1929-30, addressed to the Lords of the Committee of the Privy Council for Medical Research, and through them to the King's Most Excellent Majesty in Council, contains much interesting information as to the activities of the Research Council during the period covered by its Report.

The Committee of Privy Council state that "the national value of this work for the protection and assistance both of the public and of the medical profession is evident enough. Its full value is only attainable by international agreement, and in recent years steady progress had been made towards the general adoption of world-wide standards of biological measurement.

"The machinery of the League of Nations has greatly assisted this progress. By means of it an International Conference was held in London in 1921 to consider the establishment of an international system of common standards for estimating therapeutic sera and similar products used in medical practice or medical research. This, like the second conference in Paris in 1922, to consider the same subjects, was attended by representatives of Germany, the United States and Russia, as well as those of other nations participating then in the work of the League. . . .

"During the present year it is proposed to extend international agreement so far as possible into the new fields of study and of practical medicine which have been opened up by the discovery of the accessory factors of diet known as vitamins. We are assured that the Medical Research Council are actively promoting work at the appropriate University and other centres so that this country may be in a position to make an adequate contribution in this direction of international effort."

Maternal Mortality and the Study of Puerperal Fever.

The Medical Research Council state that over a long series of years they "have assisted scientific studies that bear upon the reduction of maternal mortality. These have fallen mainly into two groups; the first is concerned with the disturbances in the chemical processes of the body associated with pregnancy, or puerperal toxæmias, and the second has dealt with the problems both of the prevention and of the treatment of septic infection during or after childbirth, or puerperal fevers."

Nutrition and New Studies of Vitamins.

"The immense practical importance of this subject, especially to an industrial and island population, no less than its high scientific interest, has greatly stimulated work in this new chapter of medical knowledge. The special nature of the only technical methods at present available in this field of research requires careful organization and high expenditure. . . . It will be generally agreed, the Council think, that the claims of this field of work are as high as those of any other on the grounds of urgency and promise, and it may be said with confidence that without the heavy subventions that Parliament have provided through the Council, the Universities could not have undertaken work upon the scale which has made possible the remarkable contributions that have been brought to the general stock of knowledge by workers in Great Britain since the birth of this new subject.

"Much recent work has been concentrated upon Vitamin A which probably represents a main constituent of the original growth factor that Sir Frederick Hopkins revealed in his first demonstration of these essential accessory food factors in 1912.

"With the permission and the active assistance of the late Lord Thomson, Secretary of State for Air, the Council have already been enabled to arrange in a large and important section of the Royal Air Force personnel, who have submitted themselves voluntarily to the trial, a controlled test of the value, if any, of a regular administration of Vitamin A in the prevention of colds or other ailments during the winter months, under various conditions of indoor and outdoor work. Another inquiry has been arranged in co-operation with the medical staff of the London County Council to ascertain the value of this vitamin in the treatment of infective middle-ear disease after scarlet fever, and in the prevention of dangerous, infective sequelæ after the common infective fevers."

The whole Report of the Medical Research Council, which is signed by its Chairman, the Right Hon. the Viscount D'Abernon, G.C.B., G.C.M.G., LL.D., is deserving of careful study.

NEW REGULATIONS FOR CASUALS.

We are glad to note the humanising of treatment for casuals. The Ministry of Health has issued a new order concerning them. A day room and beds have to be provided for every casual ward. Hammocks will not be considered as beds. The regulation for the searching of casuals has been omitted, but they will be required to hand their possessions to an officer. The power of search is retained if necessary. Every casual is to be bathed and he will be provided with a nightshirt. In the dietary gruel is omitted. Stonebreaking, stonepounding, and corn grinding are no longer among the tasks prescribed for casuals. There is to be closer medical examination, and casuals suffering from disease are to be advised by the medical officer to induce them to enter and remain in an institution.

AUTO-TRANSFUSION.

In a recent issue the *Lancet* reports a discussion which took place on a case of ruptured Ectopic Pregnancy the notes on which were presented by Dr. D. J. Cannon to the Section of Obstetrics of the Royal Academy of Medicine in Ireland. Several speakers referred to the method of "auto-transfusion," or the return of the patient's own extravasated blood to the circulation. Our contemporary reports that the history and use of this method have lately been reviewed by Dr. G. E. May (New England Medical Journal, December 1930) who thinks it sometimes of inestimable value. The contra-indications, he says are few.

"The apparatus he describes is simple, comprising a beaker, a rod, a funnel, two cups, and two 50 c.cm. ampoules of 2 per cent. sodium citrate. A suction apparatus is useful, but not necessary. The quantity of citrate used is 10 c.cm. of 2 per cent. solution for each 90 c.cm. of blood. The abdomen is opened with the patient lying flat; a small incision is made in the peritoneum and the edges are held up to prevent loss of blood. A cup is placed against one edge of the incision, and the blood is run into it and quickly transferred to the beaker containing the citrate which is constantly stirred by a nurse. The peritoneal incision is then enlarged, the tube is brought up and its bleeding stopped, and then the remaining blood is baled out with the cups. The patient has been receiving saline solution throughout the operation and the citrated blood is added to the saline by filtering it through 15 to 20 layers of gauze in the funnel into the gravity flask. The infusion should be made by gravity rather than by pressure, so as to avoid overloading the right side of the heart."

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