

27,000 NEW BLOOD DONORS.

HOSPITALS' DEMANDS INCREASING.

During the June quarter 27,546 new donors joined the National Blood Transfusion Service—approximately twice as many as in the first quarter—and blood was given by 66,557 donors.

The estimated donor panel strength is now about 350,000.

To provide for further increases in the demands for blood and plasma and to ensure that donors are not asked to give blood more often than once every six months, some 168,000 new volunteers are required in England and Wales.

MORE "CATCH-A-COLD" VOLUNTEERS WANTED

More volunteers are urgently required for the "catch-a-cold" experiments which for the past 18 months have been conducted by the Common Cold Research Unit, set up by the Medical Research Council and the Ministry of Health.

This research is being conducted at the Harvard Hospital, Salisbury, and so far about 500 volunteers, men and women, have taken part. Honeymoon couples have been among the married volunteers who have submitted themselves to the tests.

Never before in any country in the world have experiments on this scale with human volunteers been undertaken in the investigation of the Common Cold. The research team have a two-fold aim:

1. To identify beyond all doubt the nature of the virus causing the common cold, and;
2. To establish how colds are transmitted from one person to another.

Two important discoveries.

It was emphasised when the investigations started that dramatic or spectacular results could not be expected but the work is making steady progress. The most important discoveries so far are:

1. It has been established that the type of virus which causes colds is roughly in size 1/10,000ths mm. It is about the size of the influenza virus. It is too small to be seen through the most powerful microscope available in this country and its size has to be estimated through the use of special filters.
2. New facts have been elucidated about the conditions under which the virus preserves its activity. For example, it can withstand freezing at temperatures as low as 70° C. (minus seventy degrees Centigrade).

Efforts to grow Virus have failed.

Research has been concentrated on trying to grow the virus in the laboratory on eggs. These efforts have so far proved unsuccessful.

For long term research of this kind a regular flow of volunteers is imperative if the work is to go on smoothly and without interruption.

Volunteers are accommodated in batches of 24. They live in pairs in complete isolation from other human contact for 10 days. Before the test each volunteer must be free from any symptoms of a cold. They then receive up the nose drops of carefully prepared fluid which in some cases is believed to contain the cold virus. Then a close check is kept to see whether or not they develop colds. On the average, one out of every three volunteers develops a cold. None, however, has been of a serious kind.

There is little difficulty in filling up with volunteer students during university vacations, but for other periods volunteers are harder to get. Next year several hundreds

are wanted. Sessions which are not yet filled are the 10-day periods beginning January 14th and 28th, February 11th and 25th, March 10th, April 14th and 28th, May 26th and June 9th. Normally people of either sex between the ages of 18 and 40 are required. Those volunteering get 10 days free holiday with 3s. a day pocket money; they can go for walks or play games. Many have liked it so much that they have come back for a second—or even a third—visit; this is allowed after a six months interval.

Those who apply to the Medical Officer, Harvard Hospital, Coombe Road, Salisbury, will receive a special application form, full details of the investigation and dates of forthcoming trials.

REGIONAL AND LOCAL DIFFERENCES IN CANCER DEATH RATES.

This monograph* by Dr. Percy Stocks, Chief Medical Statistician of the General Register Office, throws an interesting light on the local distribution of different types of cancer in England and Wales especially those of the stomach and lung.

While a countryman is less likely than a city dweller to suffer from cancer, he is more likely to have cancer of the stomach if he has cancer at all. In North Wales particularly, the female death rate for stomach cancer is between 74 and 103 per cent. in excess of those of England and Wales. Because the incidence of all types of cancer is so much greater in urban than in rural areas, the death rate for stomach cancer at early ages is also greater and is clearly associated with measurable social factors such as social class indices and housing density. In towns with the poorest average social conditions, the death rate of females aged 45–64 tends to be high for cancer of the stomach and uterus, and low for cancer of the breast and ovary; while in towns with the best social conditions, rates tend to be low for stomach cancer and high for ovarian cancer.

Cancer of the lung, which has increased rapidly during the last two decades, has, however, no significant connection with social conditions. It appears to be associated with the degree of sunlight. An analysis of death rates in twenty of the largest towns of England and Wales suggests that either smokiness of the atmosphere tends to produce lung cancer, or sunlight tends to prevent it.

In a prefatory note the Registrar-General points out that "every year in England and Wales cancer kills more than 70,000 people, more in one single year than were killed by bombing and rockets in nearly six years of war. . . . The General Register Office collects, classifies and analyses the details and circumstances of deaths from cancer and also helps with analysis of the results of treatment. The main facts and such inferences as have been drawn are published in the Registrar-General's Annual Review so that others may have them as raw material from which to build new knowledge, and as a touchstone for new theory and practice."

The present monograph is stated to be "the first of a new series of occasional publications entitled 'Studies in Medical and Population Subjects', the object of which is to provide in convenient form a more extensive treatment of important subjects than is practicable within the limits of the Annual Review. Facts and information, and inferences from them, obviously cannot exert their full value and effect unless they are made widely known to those who can use them with profit."

* "Studies in Medical and Population Subjects, No. 1; Regional and Local Differences in Cancer Death Rates" by Percy Stocks, M.D., D.P.H., H.M. Stationery Office, price 1/- net.

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