

## U.S. Army Doctors Plan Study of Melanoma.

THE Army Medical Department will soon point its research guns at another disease that has long been an enigma to the medical world, Major-General Raymond W. Bliss, the Surgeon-General of the Army, announced recently. Malignant melanoma is not a common disease; but because early diagnosis has seldom been possible, and because successful treatment (other than early surgery) has never been found, the Army has decided to make an intensive study of some 400 autopsy and surgical specimens. Having collected this material over a number of years, the Army Institute of Pathology is now preparing thousands of slides for an exhaustive study that may continue five or six years. Pathologists and dermatologists of the Army Medical Department hope that findings will bring a complete histological understanding of the disease, its manner of growth, and criteria for recognition of malignant melanoma in an early stage . . . before it has had time to pump death into the blood stream.

Malignant melanoma originates from an apparently harmless black mole and kills with lightning speed. A mole that has been inconspicuous for years may suddenly grow larger and become deeper in colour. This may happen after the nevus has been irritated or bruised through contact with a tight collar, a belt, or a shoe. It is true that every mole that becomes irritated does not cause malignant melanoma; but the danger is sufficiently great that a well-known dermatologist has said: "Anyone who permits a mole to become inflamed takes part in his self-destruction." Through an inexplicable change in its cellular structure, the small nevus becomes malignant; and unless the entire area is removed immediately by surgery, it may add one more death to the number of people who have died from melanoma. Two to four years is the maximum time that one can expect to live after the malignancy has set in.

Melanoma is one of many problems on which Army pathologists, dermatologists, and allied scientists are at work. Of value to civilians as well as to the Armed Forces, is a project recently completed by the Army Industrial Hygiene Laboratory, in co-operation with officers and employees of the Philadelphia Quartermaster Depot. Patch tests have been made on 300 civilian employees who volunteered to co-operate in this research to find out which types of clothing and equipment do, or do not, cause irritation of the skin. Cloths and fabrics were the materials tested. Lt.-Col. B. D. Holland of the Army Medical Corps reports that a wealth of interesting data has been found and that results will soon be made known.

Other projects under way are studies in radiation injury; carcinoma of the lip; deficiency diseases having dermatological manifestations; atabrine dermatitis; and high altitude frostbite.

To cover the Army's broad field of dermatology, 27 additional specialists are needed in the Army Medical Department: seven dermatologists who are Board members and 20 who have completed formal dermatology residencies of two to three years duration. Information regarding these openings may be obtained by writing The Surgeon-General of the Army, Washington 25, D.C.

## The Passing Bell.

WE deeply regret to announce the death, on March 21st, 1949, at Queen Alexandra's Military Hospital, Millbank, London, S.W.1, of Chief Commander Lilian Ellen Murphy, Queen Alexandra's Royal Army Nursing Corps. She served in India, North Africa, Middle East, West Africa and at home.

## The Army Nurses' At Home.

AT the Annual At Home of the Army Nurses held on April 11th, one did feel as though a cloud hung on the horizon, caused by the very regrettable absence, through illness, of Miss A. Thomson, C.B.E., R.R.C., Matron-in-Chief of Queen Alexandra's Royal Army Nursing Corps.

On this occasion therefore Miss E. M. B. Dyson, M.B.E., R.R.C., received the guests with Major General J. C. A. Dowse, Commandant of the Royal Army Medical Corps, who deputised for the Director-General, who was ill.

It was refreshing, however, to find the very happy atmosphere of friend greeting friend to chat over the time since they had last met, and the bright uniform of our Army Nurses added lustre to the gathering.

Among the distinguished guests present one was happy to see—The Dowager Countess Airlie, Dowager Lady Ampthill, Mrs. Dowse, Dame Louisa Wilkinson, Major General F. Harris, General Sir James Steele, and Junior Commander A. Flanagan.

## The British Hospitals Association.

THE decision of the British Hospitals Association voluntarily to wind up, inevitable though this is as the sequel to the nationalisation of the voluntary hospitals, will be received with regret.

For upwards of a quarter of a century the Association, with its associated Central Bureau of Hospital Information, has exerted a profound influence on the course of hospital affairs; and its Hospitals Year Book has been officially accepted as the standard work of reference.

Representative and democratic in character, the Association's chief function in peacetime, under the guidance of Sir Harold Pink and the late Mr. R. H. P. Orde (Secretary), was to provide a forum for the interchange of informed opinion on hospital affairs.

In the war years Mr. J. P. Wetenhall succeeded Mr. Orde, and, under the Chairmanship of Sir Bernard Docker, the Association's rôle was changed to meet the urgent needs of the times. So it became in the fullest sense the national representative body accredited by the voluntary hospitals to act on their behalf and to negotiate immediate decisions with the various Government Departments concerned. Among its principal activities were co-operating with successive Governments in the inception and maintenance of the Emergency Hospital Service throughout the war; being the distributing centre to the voluntary hospitals of war gifts from America and, later, from the British Red Cross, totalling many hundreds of thousands of pounds in value; participating on the hospitals' behalf in the Whitley Councils established during recent years to negotiate agreed conditions of service for all hospital staffs excepting doctors; the Association has also taken a very active part in the consideration of the whole problem of the shortage of nurses, and particularly on various committees advisory to the Minister of Health, the Secretary of State for Scotland, and the Minister of Labour and National Service.

Through its multifarious activities the Association with its Bureau had acquired unrivalled experience of the many-sided problems of hospital organisation, management and administration. Requests for its opinion and advice were regularly received from Government Departments, local authorities, hospitals and others—and, indeed, from all parts of the world—and the national Press have made much use of it as a source of reference.

It had a leading part to play in the discussions with successive Ministers of Health preliminary to the introduction of a National Health Service, and it was instrumental in securing reasoned amendments of considerable importance in the National Health Service Acts for England and Wales, for Scotland and for Northern Ireland.

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