

Adults With High Living Standard Found More Susceptible To Polio

United Press Science Editor
By DELOS SMITH
New York — (U.P.) — Science has verified a long-held suspicion that adults enjoying high standards of living can be almost as susceptible to polio as their children.

A tightly "localized" polio epidemic in New Canaan, Conn., an expensive exclusive outer suburb of New York City, provided an ideal opportunity for a thorough, scientific investigation.

Dr. Joseph L. Melnick, professor of epidemiology, Yale University School of Medicine, seized the opportunity. He and his associates, Drs. James P. Nolan and Barbara H. Wilmer, have made their report.

The epidemic began with a four-year-old girl, one of 35 pupils in a nursery school. She missed school beginning June 4,

1954, because she was ill with fever but no one suspected polio at the time. Within two weeks four of her classmates and the mother of one of them were down with polio.

There were two more cases in June and five more during the first week of July which was the "peak week" of the localized epidemic. The last case occurred in late July.

Contact Was Shown
There were 16 cases in all, six of them in adults. Four of the children were from the nursery school; the remainder were their brothers or sisters. Each adult was the parent of at least two small children and with almost all of them, a "contact" was easily shown — either with an earlier case of polio or with a member of a family in which there was such a case.

These were the surface facts.

The doctors began to look under the surface. They looked for polio virus in the gastro-intestinal tracts of all 35 of the school children and of their parents, brothers, sisters, and any other household "contacts." In the 16 patients, viruses were found in 88 per cent. In the 79 contacts, viruses were found in 54 per cent.

The doctors took blood samples. The presence of high antibody levels would indicate a recent polio infection. The blood of 40 per cent of the contacts showed those levels. The obvious suggestion was that there had been a number of slight illnesses during the period of the epidemic which had been "abortive or even non-paralytic poliomyelitis." The scientific investigators found that there had been — in 16 children and 40 adults.

Spread By Contact
The scientists were impressed by "the extremely invasive nature of poliomyelitis in a group of susceptible persons, regardless of age." New Canaan's high living standards meant that the virus was not spread by poor hygiene, but by contact.

But these very circumstances could also make adults of such "high socio-economic groups" more susceptible than other adults. Adults have acquired immunity to many infectious diseases by having had brushes with their viruses. But adults who have always lived in "an excellent sanitary environment" like New Canaan's would have had fewer brushes with fever viruses.

Among epidemiologists there is some question as to the necessity of vaccinating adults with the Salk vaccine. This and other implications the scientists left the readers of their report — which was published by the New England Journal of Medicine — to ponder.

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Benson Denies Charge Made by Stevenson

Washington — (U.P.) — Agriculture Secretary Ezra T. Benson has denied a charge by Adlai E. Stevenson that Benson tried to blame the farmer's plight on wage increases of city workers.

Benson, in a statement issued yesterday by the Republican National committee, said the present farm problem stems from "unsound Democrat programs."

"The farm problem of today, which Mr. Stevenson lately decided has political possibilities, grew out of the Democrat administration's refusal to face the facts," Benson said.

In a speech to the AFL-CIO convention in New York last week, Stevenson accused Benson and another Cabinet member of a "design to play the ugly politics of group hatred." He said Benson had suggested in a speech that labor's wage gains widen the spread between farm prices and retail food prices, thus helping drive down farm prices.

Road Grader in Yard Brings 'Parking Fee'

Omaha, Neb. — (U.P.) — Mrs. Della Pearson obliged when "a nice man" asked if he could leave a road-grader in her yard overnight.

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Mrs. Pearson called all construction companies, the county and city authorities. All laughed when she asked whether they had lost a road-grader.

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