

Tetanus Kills Two In County

By K. H. SUTHERLAND
County Health Officer

Another case of tetanus has occurred in Los Angeles County, bringing to eight this year the total number of persons to suffer this racking yet wholly preventable disease.

Tetanus nearly always is associated with a wound. Many people think that the only wounds likely to produce tetanus are punctures caused by rusty nails. There was not a single puncture among the eight cases.

Latest victim is a 63-year-old man who scratched his arm while pruning a tree. One week later he was hospitalized in extremely grave condition.

FIVE SMALL children have been among those stricken by tetanus this year. Still hospitalized but apparently recovering is a 3-year-old girl who cut the sole of her foot on a piece of glass. A 4-year-old boy had scratches so slight it was impossible to be sure how the tetanus germ had gained its hold. This child lived. A 3-year-old was jabbed in the foot with a sharpened stick while playing with other children. He died of tetanus. Another 3-year-old crushed his finger in a slammed car door. He also had tetanus, but lived.

The remainder were adults who suffered equally undramatic injuries: a thumb cut during a fall on a sidewalk; a finger cut on a power saw; an open ulcer on the arm resulting from the too vigorous scratching of an itch. Two of these recovered, one died.

THERE WAS no type of injury common to the afflicted eight. The one thing they did have in common was that none—not one—had been immunized against tetanus.

Tetanus is caused by a bacillus which grows in the deep, airless part of wounds and produces a toxin (poison) affecting the nerves. The most common early symptom of tetanus is a painful spasm of the jaw muscles, accounting for the common name "lockjaw." Later the sufferer may be thrown into violent convulsions by any noise or by the slightest jarring.

The tetanus germ lives in the intestines of grass eating animals and is very prevalent in barns, stables and farmyards. However, even in completely urban areas the germ is widespread in soil and street dust since most yard and garden soils are periodically treated with animal manure.

IMMUNIZATION and properly spaced booster injections afford very effective protection against tetanus. In the unprotected, however, this disease is difficult, expensive and often impossible to cure.

Lack of immunization carries secondary difficulties also. Unimmunized persons who suffer wounds which are likely to be tetanus producing must have an injection of antitoxin, a serum giving some immediate short-term protection. This material may be made with horse serum, to which sensitive persons may have serious reactions. That made with human serum is preferable but expensive. Antitoxin is a poor second best weapon against tetanus compared to proper immunization before injuries occur.

A leaflet on tetanus will be sent free to anyone sending a written request to the Division of Health Education, Los Angeles County Health Dept., 220 North Broadway, Los Angeles 12.

Applications Will Be Taken By Law School

The Law School of Pacific Coast University of Long Beach, 236 Newport Ave., is now accepting applications for admission to its first-year class.

Robert W. Parkin, a graduate of the school and deputy city prosecutor of the City of Long Beach has been added to the faculty. He will teach criminal law and procedure. Call GE 9-7346, for more information.



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