

Comments Given on Meningitis

By K. H. SUTHERLAND, M.D.
County Health Officer

Recent reports of scattered cases of meningitis in California and the outbreak among servicemen at Ft. Ord have raised public anxiety and curiosity concerning the extent of the threat from this illness.

Meningitis is a general term referring to inflammation of the membranes which envelop the brain and spinal cord. Meningococcal meningitis, also called spinal meningitis, is a specific disease sometimes referred to as epidemic meningitis because of its tendency to occur in epidemic cycles. It is with this form of meningitis that we are presently concerned.

As in the pattern of many communicable diseases, this type of meningitis occurs within the population in fairly regular time cycles. For example, in Los Angeles County there have been five waves of high numbers of cases of meningitis since 1929. Each of the five wave cycles has required from two to six years to complete, and intervals between peak years have been from seven to nine

1962 have been, in a period of increasing incidence in the disease. This means that cases will continue to occur in increasing numbers until the peak is reached and a decline follows. This increase in incidence of meningitis is present not only in California but also has been noted elsewhere in the U.S.

Ordinarily meningitis is not a common disease in the general population. Localized outbreaks most often occur in an institutional or military setting where close and continuous living association provides and intensity of exposure not usually found in civilian environments or even in family association.

Infected persons harbor the disease organism of meningitis in the nose and throat and spread it directly from person to person or by infected droplet contact. It is highly unlikely for the organism to be spread by contaminated articles as it is extremely sensitive to chilling, drying, heating and sunlight, and cannot live long outside the human body.

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disease is actually low and relatively few persons who come into contact with the disease become sick, although some of them may become healthy carriers, capable of spreading the disease organism to others without becoming ill themselves.

Currently penicillin is successfully used in the treatment of meningitis cases as well as for the precautionary treatment of persons in close contact with cases. Administration of penicillin has proved useful in preventing illness among such contacts. No vaccine is available for immunizing against meningitis.

Projections concerning meningitis in the immediate future, then, would include two possibilities: 1) No large outbreaks are expected to occur in the civilian population although a rising number of scattered cases may be anticipated until the peak of the current cycle is reached; and 2) localized outbreaks may be expected to occur in military and other establishments where healthy carriers are likely to be gathered in close proximity.

Youth Atom Meeting

Two Students Compete For Conference Seat

Names of two outstanding science students from Torrance who have been nominated as candidates for a delegate's seat to the 1964 National Youth Conference on the Atom were announced this week.

Selected from the area were Adele Palmer, a West High senior, and Patrick Gahwolf, a senior at Bishop Montgomery High School. Miss Palmer is the nominee of the Torrance Unified School District, and Gahwolf was selected as the nominee of area parochial schools.

Southern California Edison Co., local sponsor of the annual youth conference, invited every public, parochial, and private high school district to nominate one student as a possible delegate.

THE CONFERENCE will be held Nov. 5 through 7 in Chicago, Ill., according to Edison district manager L. E. Jenkins. One student will be selected to represent each of Edison's six commercial di-

visions: Eastern, Metropolitan, Orange County, San Joaquin Valley, Southern, and Westera.

Miss Palmer is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. H. H. Palmer of 20313 Donora Ave. She is active in the California Scholarship Federation chapter at West High, a member of the Electronics Club, and a member of the Pep Squad. Last summer, she completed an advanced course at El Camino College.

Gahwolf, son of Mr. and Mrs. Fred Gahwolf of 812 N. Juanita Ave., Redondo Beach, is president of the Montgomery Science Club, a reporter for the school paper, and a member of the BMHS Scholarship Club.

AMONG THE featured speakers at the Chicago meeting will be Dr. Glen T. Seaborg, chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission and a Nobel Prize winner in physics. Dr. Seaborg is a farmer

chancellor of the University of California, Berkeley. Dr. George Wells Beadle, president of the University of Chicago also will speak.

"Twin goals of the conference are to reward hard work on the part of future scientists and to sharpen their awareness of the dramatic strides being taken in nuclear energy and other scientific fields," Jenkins said.

Both local nominees will compete with other candidates from the area.

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