Germicides and Antibacterial Agents*

Laboratory Section

NEW germicidal agents of great potential importance for the control of communicable disease are currently in process of development and application. The Standard Methods Committee for the Examination of Germicides and Antibacterial Agents has been organized this year. Five of the eight members of the committee have papers on the program of this Annual Meeting. The present report represents, however, a statement by the chairman in regard to the membership of the committee and the scope of its activities rather than a report by the several referees on their special fields.

The achievement of a considerable measure of control over the broad categories of the intestinal and the insect-borne diseases has been a major success in public health endeavor. The infections contracted through the respiratory tract, the air-borne diseases, however, stand today as an unanswered challenge to those concerned with protecting the public health. The childhood contagions, whooping cough, measles, mumps, chicken pox and scarlet fever are presumably contracted through the respiratory tract; colds and upper respiratory infections cause by far the greater part of the absences from work in adults; influenza, measles and their complications have periodically, and particularly under war conditions, flared up into destructive epidemics and pandemics. No one of these major hazards from air-borne disease is under satisfactory control at the present moment, although a few far-sighted individuals are now vigorously investigating potential means for their control.

It is a great pleasure, therefore, to announce that Professor O. H. Robertson, of the University of Chicago, and Dr. Alexander Hollaender, of the National Institute of Health, have accepted membership on the Standard Methods Committee for the Examination of Germicides and Antibacterial Agents as Referees, respectively, on germicidal vapors and mists and on ultra-violet radiation for the disinfection of air.

Another new class of germicidal agents are those metabolites of certain bacteria and fungi which are antagonistic to many pathogenic microorganisms. Bacterial antagonistic substances are not only of great scientific interest, but they are already finding practical use in clearing up infections, for instance, due to sulfonamide-resistant strains. Much of the current activity in this field has originated in the laboratory of Dr. Selman A. Waksman, President in 1942 of the Society of American Bacteriologists. Dr. Waksman has consented to act as Referee on Antibiotic Substances.

Detergents, both anionic and cationic, have latterly assumed importance as practical germicides. Dr. W. L. Mallmann, of the Michigan State College, has had much experience in this field and has consented to act as Referee in it.

* Report of the Chairman of the Standard Methods Committee for the Examination of Germicides and Antibacterial Agents. This committee was originally authorized as the Standard Methods Committee for the Examination of Disinfectants and Antiseptics (American Public Health Association Year Book, 1941-1942, page 19). The change of name was authorized by action of the Coordinating Committee as better representing the scope of the committee.
In the established field of chemical antiseptics and chemical germicides, the committee is fortunate in having two referees of experience and established reputation, Dr. Henry Welch of the Food and Drug Administration and Dr. C. M. Brewer of the Department of Agriculture.

Fungal infections of the skin are a widespread source of annoyance and discomfort and under war conditions have become a serious source of disability. A refereeship on fungicidal and fungistatic agents has therefore been established and been accepted by Dr. C. W. Emmons of the National Institute of Health.

The chairman of this committee, as a member of the Council on Pharmacy and Chemistry of the American Medical Association and certain relevant National Research Council committees, has many occasions for desiring clarification of criteria and standards for all classes of germicidal agents, chemical, physical, and biological. The Council of Pharmacy and Chemistry already enjoys full cooperation with the National Institute of Health and the Food and Drug Administration. The membership of our committee of the Laboratory Section, American Public Health Association, should aid in the coördination of ideas and information among those charged with working toward standards of safety and efficacy of all classes of germicidal agents and of working out optimal conditions for their use.

The present members of the Standard Methods Committee for the Examination of Germicides and Antibacterial Agents are:

- **Stuart Mudd, M.D., Chairman**
- **Antibiotic Agents:** Selman A. Waksman, Ph.D.†
- **Chemical Antiseptics:** Henry Welch, Ph.D.*
- **Chemical Disinfectants:** C. M. Brewer*
- **Detergents:** W. L. Mallmann, Ph.D.*
- **Disinfection of Air by Germicidal Vapors and Mists:** O. H. Robertson, M.D.†
- **Disinfection of Air by Ultra-violet Irradiation:** Alexander Hollaender, Ph.D.†
- **Fungicidal and Fungistatic Agents:** C. W. Emmons, Ph.D.†

* Referee
† Associate Referee