sleepless nights, and the evidence indicates that these drugs would therefore help the restoration of the tissues during sleep.²¹

At the United States Army Institute for Surgical Research Wilmore and his colleagues, having reviewed the mechanisms and effects of surgical stress, concluded that adequate rest periods for uninterrupted sleep should be provided and the duration of sleep always recorded.²² It remains an obligation on all who work in hospitals to reduce noise, to relieve patients' anxieties, and help them to sleep.

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MPTP parkinsonism

Our understanding of Parkinson's disease has progressed very substantially since its first description in 1817. The latest advance is the discovery that low doses of MPTP (1-methyl-4-phenyl-1,2,3,6-tetrahydropyridine) selectively destroy pigmented dopaminergic neurones in both man and monkeys and so may mimic the physical and biochemical signs of Parkinson's disease, including its response to levodopa.

In 1976 a 23 year old American addict manufacturing his own pethidine analogue took a synthetic shortcut and injected himself daily with what was later with his help proved to be two closely related byproducts; one was MPTP.¹ On the third day he developed a pure and severe parkinsonian syndrome which responded dramatically to levodopa but persisted (with some spontaneous improve-

ment) until his suicide 18 months later. Results of biochemical studies on his cerebrospinal fluid were consistent with severe disruption of dopamine metabolism, and his brain showed destruction solely within the substantia nigra.

Last year a cluster of identical cases was reported from California of patients who had injected the same substance sold to them as "synthetic heroin."² These patients, also young and severely affected, showed no spontaneous improvement. Their symptoms responded well to levodopa, but some soon developed a fluctuating response and hallucinations. That these complications developed so early supports the view that when seen in idiopathic disease they are due to the severity of the disease rather than to any long term toxicity of levodopa.³ About 100 other persons exposed at around the same dosage were clinically unaffected, perhaps indicating some individual susceptibility factor. Their follow up may answer the question whether Parkinson's disease is caused by a persistently active agent or whether a fixed insult may become clinically manifest later by superimposed aging.⁴ The drug abusing community was informed with commendable speed, bringing this epidemic to an end. Subsequently one further probable case has occurred in a 37 year old chemist exposed while doing laboratory work—a warning to others handling this compound.⁵

As soon as the episode became known attempts were made to reproduce the syndrome in animals. This proved easy: low doses of MPTP given to primates produced striking clinical, pathological, and biochemical changes.^{6,7} Other species seem resistant, however—though with much higher doses—biochemical evidence of dopaminergic dysfunction occurs in mice.⁸ Pathological studies in primates show fewer abnormalities outside the substantia nigra than is usual in Parkinson's disease and Lewy inclusion bodies, long held to be fundamental to idiopathic parkinsonism, are absent. These abnormalities, however, may yet prove to develop in animals kept alive longer. The only human brain examined showed one possible inclusion body.¹ Dopamine cells elsewhere in the brain are not affected.

Analysis of the mechanism of action of the toxin should provide further insights. Already, selegiline, a monoamine oxidase inhibitor concerned with dopamine breakdown, has been found to prevent toxicity, possibly indicating that an oxidation metabolite produces the damage.^{8,8a} Another interesting question is whether nicotine reduces toxicity, for smoking is suspected of reducing the incidence of Parkinson's disease. The reason pigmented dopamine cells are susceptible may be linked with the high affinity of MPTP for melanin.⁹ Also their high concentration of metal ion might stimulate free radical production during the oxidation of MPTP and dopamine^{10,11}; and relatively poor inherent or acquired antioxidant capabilities—for instance, the amount of available glutathione peroxidase—then exaggerate these effects. An inability to cope with unpleasant oxygen species has been advanced as a factor in parkinsonism¹² and in the action of other dopamine cell toxins such as manganese and 6-hydroxydopamine.^{13,14} This hypothesis is worth pursuing, as the generation of these products is potentially containable by antioxidants.

The strong evidence against any important genetic element in the aetiology of parkinsonism argues an environmental cause. Postencephalitic Parkinson's disease is so different from the idiopathic form that a toxin is at least as attractive a proposition as another virus. Such a toxin would be ubiquitous, given the lack of any known geographical or occupational factor, and might be modern. Other culprits

might emerge; but MPTP is a simple molecule consisting of a benzene and a piperidine ring, both of which exist separately in many compounds in plants, animals, and man. For example, some tryptamine metabolites look remarkably close to MPTP. Conceivably, therefore, an environmental source may exist for MPTP or an acquired metabolic defect may produce it or its toxic metabolite *in vivo*.

The phenomenon of MPTP toxicity has opened up many new testable approaches likely to help us understand parkinsonism and given pharmacologists a superior animal model for searching for better dopaminergic agents and—more important—novel approaches to prevent or slow progression of the disease. Lessons are also apparent for other diseases in which neuronal systems selectively disintegrate.

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Regular Review

Scandinavian model for eliminating measles, mumps, and rubella

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Both the individual and society should be protected against measles, mumps, and rubella. Measles is often troublesome for the child and the family, but the main reason for vaccinating against it is the rare but sometimes severe encephalitis. Mumps often causes meningitis and encephalitis and sometimes orchitis and one sided deafness. Rubella is a mild disease but has teratogenic effects.

In a community in which no one has been vaccinated the number of individuals susceptible to a disease increases between outbreaks, and an epidemic starts when enough of them have accumulated. When the epidemic finishes some susceptible people will still remain.

In industrialised countries almost all adults have antibodies against measles, but at the end of an epidemic about one third of children aged under 15 are not immune. In the prevaccination community about a tenth of adults lack antibodies against mumps and about a seventh lack antibodies against rubella. Thus the number of people susceptible to these diseases will be much higher than the number susceptible to measles. For Sweden we have calculated (fig 1) that the number of children and adults without immunity to mumps will never be less than 10 year groups and against rubella 15 year groups—where a year group is the number of people born in one year.

If vaccination manages to reduce the number of susceptible individuals below the minimum number found in the prevaccination community no epidemic will occur and the circulation of the virus may stop. In the short term this is

easily accomplished with a one dose programme and a high frequency of vaccination.

In the long term, however, even if one dose vaccination gives lifelong immunity such a programme will build up a susceptible population in older age groups. All individuals will not be vaccinated and all those vaccinated will not become immune. The accumulation of susceptible adults is undesirable—obviously in the case of rubella, since the only

FIG 1—Morbidity curves for measles (ME), mumps (MU), and rubella (R) in prevaccination community.