

METHADONE— *Boon or Menace?*

While the Drug May Be an Excellent Substitute for Morphine, It Can Lead to Drug Addiction

manufacture it under various names—amidone, adanon, dolophine and methadon. The American Medical Association recently gave it the official name of methadone.

Researchers believed at first that methadone could be administered with only a slight chance of addiction, but opinion has shifted and three doctors from the United States Public Health Service Hospital at Lexington, Ky., reported in the A.M.A. Journal the other day that the addiction liability of methadone was virtually equal to that of morphine.

One patient at the hospital, which is foremost in the world in the treatment and study of drug addiction, had a much more succinct observation:

preparations had comparable relief from pain."

Dolophine was said to be effective in controlling pain and discomfort after surgery, for the distress of congestive heart failure and angina pectoris, for the control of severe coughs and for numerous other purposes, but the booklet added frankly:

"One must consider dolophine hydrochloride a potentially addicting drug and administer it with caution similar to that attending the use of morphine until its status in general practice is definitely established."

That status appeared to have been established quite thoroughly by the Public Health Service doctors, who warned, after many tests on volunteer patients, that although methadone was an excellent drug for the relief of chronic pain, its users could expect to become just as addicted as if they had been taking morphine or any other narcotic.

At the same time, H. J. Anslinger, U. S. Commissioner of Narcotics, told doctors in a letter in the medical journal that too many of them were allowing themselves to be duped into prescribing methadone for drug addicts who pretended to be suffering from other afflictions. The number using methadone, Anslinger said, was definitely on the increase.



"It's My Leg," the Addict Said, "Some Kind of Neuritis, They Say."

By Allen Greenacre

HE halted for a moment outside the door of the doctor's office, rehearsing in his mind exactly what he must do. The hand that reached for the knob was shaking not only from his desperate need for morphine but from fear that his ruse wouldn't work. As he entered the room, there was no need to simulate the pain. His whole body ached.

"It's my leg, Doctor," he said with a grimace. "My right leg. Comes on me about once a year and there's nothing can be done about it. Some kind of neuritis, they say. What I need is something to kill the pain."

The doctor looked at him suspiciously but he went on quickly:

"Now don't get the idea I want morphine. Nothing like that, Doc. I had an uncle once who was on the stuff, and I'm afraid of it. But how about giving me a prescription for some of this?"

He held out a slip of paper with a name written on it.

"Dolophine?" the doctor asked. "Where did you hear about that?"

"Friend of mine wrote it down," the patient said. "Perfectly harmless, he says, but it fixes you up."

Deceived by the man's plausible story, the doctor wrote out a prescription and another dope addict had obtained relief until he could locate a new and steady source of supply.

In the crystals of the white powder that he raced to the nearest drugstore to get are qualities which some doctors hail as a boon to mankind but which make others regard the synthetic drug as a menace of alarming proportions.

Its formula was brought to America from Germany after the war as a part of confiscated scientific information. Nazi chemists had worked it out while searching for a quick pain-killing substitute for morphine on the battlefields. Ignored at first, the compound eventually was tested and found effective in relieving some forms of suffering. Drug companies began to

"When I came here I had been taking, daily for two and a half years, 12 grains of morphine dissolved in demerol (another morphine-like drug); 20 grains of a powerful barbiturate and a quart of whiskey. I was taken off those, gradually, in about 30 days and I didn't suffer very much.

"Then I developed phlebitis in my legs. It was very painful and I was given methadone for relief. In three weeks I had developed a methadone addiction which was much tougher to get over than all the other stuff put together."

The companies which manufacture methadone are not reticent in its praises although they also point out its faults. A booklet published for the medical profession by one firm, which calls its product "dolophine hydrochloride," reports an experiment in which the drug was substituted for morphine, and vice versa, during a six-week period in the surgical wards of a hospital.

"Physicians and nurses were unable to distinguish one drug from the other," the report said, "and patients who received both

"The general over-all effect of methadone satisfies the craving of the morphine and heroin addict with the same disastrous results," Anslinger wrote.

"Certain narcotic addicts do not wish to take the risk of being brought to the attention of narcotic officers by visiting physicians. This

class of addict, when not in a position to obtain morphine or heroin, will purchase methadone from peddlers who obtain their supply on 'prescriptions' or through drugstore burglaries. Methadone is almost always included in the narcotic drugs taken by burglars."

The gravest danger of methadone, however, is not in the comparatively small amounts obtained from phony prescriptions or from burglarized stores, but in the unlimited supply that could be acquired by drug rings with comparative ease. Morphine and heroin come from opium, which is hard to get.

Cocaine comes from cocoa leaves, which are equally rare.

Methadone can be made by any smart chemist from common chemicals which are easily obtainable anywhere.

Illustrated by E. C. VAN SWEARINGEN