

Preliminary figures, with 5,784 cases and a tragic toll of 214 deaths to date, would seem to indicate that this year's outbreak of polio -- particularly in Manitoba and the earlier epidemic in the Yukon -- may prove to be one of the most serious on record. That it was possible to produce in Canada the only known preventive agent -- gamma globulin -- and to ensure its equitable distribution is an outstanding illustration of effective co-operation and a tribute to the nation's public health workers.

Gamma globulin is Canada's health story of the year. To meet an emergency situation, the Federal Government granted more than \$150,000 to assist in the production of gamma globulin and to extend research into its value. Detailed plans have also been worked out to assure considerably increased production in 1954.

I am sure the members of this Association appreciate fully that many questions concerning the use and the effectiveness of gamma globulin still remain to be answered. While a great deal of publicity has been given to its value in modifying the paralysis which may follow an attack of polio, the use of this blood fraction is still in the experimental stage and there is, as yet, little justification for undue optimism.

#### A Mammoth Production Job

Interest in Canada in the use of gamma globulin for preventing or lessening the severity of paralysis from polio was aroused by reports of trials made in the United States. Many members of this group were probably present in Cleveland last year when Dr. W. McD. Hammon of Pittsburgh reported the results of tests involving some 55,000 children. Dr. Hammon found among that half of the experimental group which received gamma globulin injections an encouraging decrease in paralytic polio cases as well as a significant modification in the severity of the paralysis in those who contracted the disease.

In view of this evidence, inconclusive as it may have been, a conference was called in Ottawa last January under the chairmanship of my Deputy Minister, Dr. G.D.W. Cameron, to consider all aspects of the problem. The public health and research experts attending this conference agreed that, while final judgment should be reserved until more facts were known, every effort should be made to increase the supply of gamma globulin.

Fortunately the Connaught Medical Research Laboratories in Toronto not only had scientific personnel familiar with the complex processes involved in the production of gamma globulin but had a supply of blood serum on hand which had been stored from the Second World War. With funds provided out of the National Health Programme, special production facilities were set up and the Connaught Laboratories worked night and day to produce the needed supplies of gamma globulin.

The truly remarkable results achieved in producing approximately 25,000 average doses of gamma globulin is a tribute to Dr. Defries and his staff at the Connaught Laboratories. Particular mention should be made of the work