

### Rauwolfia alkaloids possible cause of breast cancer

Health and Welfare Minister Marc Lalonde recently announced that the Health Protection Branch of his Department had arranged to have a panel of non-governmental experts conduct an independent medical review of all available data on preparations containing Reserpine or Rauwolfia alkaloids. These drugs are widely used for the treatment of high blood pressure and are available only on prescription.

The study is the result of a report in *The Lancet*, a leading medical journal, that the long-term administration to women of preparations containing Reserpine or Rauwolfia alkaloids is associated with a two- or threefold increase in the incidence of breast cancer.

The problem was originally detected by the Boston Collaborative Drug Surveillance Program. Additional retrospective studies were conducted in Britain and Finland. This research also suggested that long-term administration of Rauwolfia derivatives was associated with an increased incidence of breast cancer in women after menopause.

Health Protection Branch officials have been in close touch with American and British health authorities on this problem. It is considered the data reported in the three studies are important enough to be brought to the immediate attention of physicians, and require a re-assessment of the role of Rauwolfia alkaloids in modern therapy, and a letter is being sent to all Canadian physicians to make them aware of the problem.

This review will take several weeks to complete, when a further announcement will be made.

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### Australians train with Canadians as peace-keepers

Forty-two officers and men from the Australian Army and Ministry of Defence are training as peace-keepers with the Canadian Armed Forces.

The training is a result of discussions last autumn, when Defence Minister James Richardson visited Australia, and later talks last January, when Australian Defence Minister Lance Barnard visited Canada.

Canada has been sending 40-man groups from combat arms units to Australia for training at the Jungle Training Centre at Canungra since 1972.

Australia indicated an interest in providing troops for peacekeeping duties several months ago and, although they have no troops currently involved in such operations, about 35 policemen from various Australian state police departments are serving as civilian policemen with the United Nations Force in Cyprus.

### Clamp down on lead pollution

Regulations issued under the Clean Air Act have been announced by Environment Canada, stating that a maximum permissible concentration of lead in leaded grades of gasoline must not exceed 3.5 gram *per* Imperial gallon as of January 1, 1976.

Surveys conducted by the Government have shown concentrations of lead in leaded grades of gasoline ranging from 0.2 gm to 4.4 gm *per* Imperial gallon.

In announcing the regulations, Federal Environment Minister Jeanne Sauvé referred to the world-wide concern about the potential long-range effects of increasing levels of lead in the urban environment.

"The absolute limit of 3.5 gm will guard against increased usage of lead in leaded grades of gasoline and in combination with the anticipated increase in sales of lead-free gasoline, should bring about the desired progressive reduction in total lead emissions from automobile exhausts," said Mme Sauvé.

She noted that the petroleum industry had been, and still is involved in a major production and distribution program to introduce lead-free gasoline

on the market to meet the increased demand for lead-free gasoline that is required by some 1975-model year cars.

The regulations include provisions, effective October 1, 1974, requiring the submission to the Minister of the Environment of a quarterly report of production quantities and average lead concentrations in gasoline produced for use or sale in Canada, or imported into Canada, as well as a quarterly report of lead additive usage. This information will assist the Government in assessing whether the expected reduction in total lead emissions is taking place.

"If it is not, we will re-evaluate the situation and decide what further reductions in the maximum permissible concentration of lead in leaded grades of gasoline are required to bring about the desired result," said Mme Sauvé.

"In passing this regulation," concluded the Minister, "Canada joins with other major industrialized countries in controlling the use of lead in gasoline. On the advice of the Department of Health and Welfare, Environment Canada intends to follow a course of prudence about all forms of lead pollution."

### Olympic coin design competition

Postmaster-General Bryce Mackasey has announced a nationwide design competition for the fifth of the seven series of Olympic coins. The competition is open to all Canadians and Canadian citizens living abroad — except employees of the Olympic Coin Program, the Royal Canadian Mint and any artists and designers who have been commissioned or are employed in any capacity by the Olympic Coin Program.

In addition to a \$1,500-cheque, which will be awarded to each of the four finalists, the winner will receive \$2,000. Entries, to be received no later than November 30, should include four designs (two for a \$5-coin and two for a \$10-coin), each reflecting characteristics of the Series V coin theme of Olympic water sports. Persons wishing to enter the Olympic Coin Program's Series V design competition should write to Olympic Coin Design Competition, P.O. Box 900, Ottawa, Ontario, K1G 3V6, for an official entry kit.