

a dispassionate look at such problems as the therapeutic effects of mountain climates. A session devoted to this topic showed that it is easier to clear fogs from minds than from mountains. Evidence was provided, especially by J. Hensel and his team (Institute of Physical Medicine, Bratislava), that patients suffering from chronic bronchitis and bronchospasm who move from an altitude of 200–300 metres to 1,350 metres show benefits in lung function tests and serum enzymes which are not attributable to rest or to clean air. The session was summed up by its chairman, E. M. Glaser, who said that the case for or against climatotherapy remains open until all those involved are ready to do as strict trials as is usual in treatment by drugs.

Even odder than climatotherapy are the fluctuating phenomena originated by G. Piccardi (University of Florence), who was supported by several disciples, especially Carmen Capel-Boute (University of Brussels) and E. Wedler (Free University, Berlin). Piccardi found that chemical tests, such as differential precipitation of bismuth oxychloride by hydrolysis and the precipitation of calcium carbonate, show fluctuations which seem to be reproducible only with diurnal cycles and with eleven-year solar cycles. Similar fluctuations were also observed in the freezing of water and in biological processes, for example, in gas exchanges of yeasts and the haemoglobin levels of blood. Shielding by metal, or, in the case of blood samples, taking people to the catacombs of Florence, abolished these fluctuations. In a different context S. W. Tromp (Biometeorological Research Centre, Leiden) reported variations of the blood sedimentation rate in the same people in the same conditions over several years, correlated only with solar cycles.

W. V. Macfarlane (University of Adelaide) reported fluctuations of conception rates in women, studied in many countries from birth records. In temperate regions the highest conception rate was during the warmest part of the year, in hot areas during the cool season. Areas with similar climates and social conditions, such as the United Kingdom and New Zealand, had similar patterns. Conception only seems to fluctuate because sexual activity is fairly constant, although it is interesting that conception becomes more frequent around Christmas where Christmas is observed. Taken together, all these findings mean that there could be important and as yet not wholly identified influences arising from the rotation of the Earth around its own axis and around the Sun, as well as from the cyclic activities of the Sun itself.

PRIMATES

Treatment and Disease

from a Correspondent

THE six day conference on experimental medicine and surgery in primates, held at the New York Medical Center, began on Sunday, September 7, to suit the surgeons, and the first day was devoted to their interests. David M. Hume (Medical College of Richmond, Virginia) described how cross-circulation may become a practical technique for patients in hepatic failure or coma, whose liver is not functioning properly, as long as there is a chance that hepatic cells will regenerate. This would be especially applicable to young

people, some of whom might be waiting for liver transplants. Baboons, chimpanzees or rhesus monkeys can be used as donors, although size is a limiting factor. Their blood is exchanged for matching human blood in conditions of hypothermia, during which the heart is stopped and the circulation maintained by cardiac and respiratory pumps. During cross-circulation through the femoral veins, the donor's liver can successfully deputize for that of the patient for five to six hours. Coma is reduced, electroencephalogram records show improvement, ascites is cleared and anuria is terminated. The donors suffer no permanent ill effects, but for the patient to survive, a succession of donors will probably be needed, for so far no patients have made a permanent recovery.

When central nervous systems were discussed, D. F. Buxton (University of Arkansas) showed that those of the rhesus monkey, chimpanzee and man are essentially similar, but with some important gross and microscopic differences related to different motor skills. H. O. Hofer (Tulane University Delta Regional Primate Research Centre) showed that, although the evolution of the brain follows phylogenetic principles, it lags behind that of other systems, thus being servant rather than master. Jaques Bert (University of Dakar, Senegal) has found considerable differences in sleep patterns among primates, related to habits rather than phylogeny.

On the day devoted to virology, L. V. Melendez and M. D. Daniel (New England Regional Primate Research Center) showed how the herpes-saimiri virus, which they described recently, produces malignant lymphomatous type lesions in owl monkeys and marmosets. It is thus the first virus of a primate found to be oncogenic in another primate.

A note of warning was sounded about infectious diseases by J. D. Douglas (6571st Aeromedical Research Laboratory, New Mexico), R. J. Cronin (University of New Mexico) and A. F. Kaufmann (National Communicable Diseases Center, Atlanta). They described spontaneous melioidosis in two stump tail macaques from Thailand. The disease developed a year after importation, reaffirming the hazard to man from this very dangerous disease, and emphasizing the care needed in handling primates even after usually accepted periods of quarantine.

In a technical and otherwise well organized programme, it is difficult to see why the organizers included a series of random papers consisting of reports from various primate laboratories which are interesting in themselves but outside the theme of the conference.

WHO

Immunodiplomacy

THERE are obvious reasons why the World Health Organization should foster an interest in immunology. In publications such as its technical reports on immunology and parasitology, immunology and malaria, and so on, the WHO has an eye to clinical applications. Other documents, like the memorandum on immunoglobulin nomenclature (*Bull. WHO*, **30**, 447; 1964) and, more recently on IgE, indicate a more liberal patronage of the subject—there is little here for the field clinician. The same is true of the latest publication on cell-