

## **RESEARCH PROJECTS**

### **GEOLOGY AND MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS**

The observation that cases of multiple sclerosis (disseminated sclerosis) etc. seldom occur singly, and that quite commonly clusters of cases may be found in circumscribed localities, is not new. Localities in which a high prevalence of multiple sclerosis, or other less precisely definable central nervous system disorders occurs, have been found in Norway, Sweden, the Outer Hebrides, Cornwall, and elsewhere.

It is suspected that some characteristic in the environment common to these areas and others may be discovered if sought, and Professor H. V. Warren, of the University of British Columbia, has directed attention to anomalies in the soil and water content of trace minerals as a possible cause. In particular he suggests that higher than normal quantities of lead occur in areas where the prevalence of multiple sclerosis is high.

Clearly the more localized the areas of high prevalence of multiple sclerosis that we find the more effectively can studies of soil chemistry be made, and the more accurately can distribution maps be prepared to demonstrate geological associations. Indications of where "high prevalence areas" are to be found may come from general practice.

The National Morbidity Survey showed that in England and Wales there were 0.6 cases per thousand persons. Members and associates of the College who suspect that the number of patients with multiple sclerosis in their practices is unduly high, or have knowledge of its frequent occurrence, are asked to notify the College Research Department on the *pro forma* at the end of this issue of the *Journal*.

This is not a census, and we do not expect to do more than identify areas of special prevalence. We are equally interested to find areas in which the condition is relatively uncommon. If we can do this with your help then geological and geochemical studies could follow, with both economy and some prospect of success.

#### **REFERENCE**

Warren, H. V., *J. Coll. gen. Practit.* (1963), 6, 517.

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### **PITYRIASIS ROSEA**

In 1959 the Medical Research Council sponsored an inquiry into Pityriasis rosea (Abercrombie, G. P., *Proc. roy. Soc. Med.*, 1962, p. 556). It is proposed to undertake a further inquiry into this condition during 1964, and the co-operation of general practitioners will be welcomed. Those taking part will be asked to complete a very brief record card for every case of Pityriasis rosea they see during the year, and to return the cards for analysis. Supplies of the cards for this investigation may be obtained on request from the **Medical Research Council, 20 Park Crescent, London, W.1.**