

Clinic Testing At Willowbrook Hotly Denied

By GAELE HUMMEL

Willowbrook State School's director, Dr. Jack Hammond, today angrily denied a state legislator's accusation that "in the late 1950s" injections of hepatitis virus for clinical research were "given every child (there) between 3 and 9 years old."

Sen. Seymour Thaler, Queens Democrat, made the charge before the Senate yesterday, adding that more than 500 children were used in the experiments.

"I don't believe that 500 parents gave their consent," Thaler shouted, after saying officials had reported parental approval was given.

"Our records containing the parents signed consent are always available to any state investigator or legislative committee," Dr. Hammond said. "No investigator from the state has yet asked to see them."

Dr. Hammond said that "carefully controlled" research and experiments have been under way at the school since 1954. He added that hundreds of institutions throughout the country are conducting similar work.

"There may well be 500 children who have participated in the experiments over the last 12 years," Hammond said. "But the parents of each child, without exception, have given us

their written consent.

"Sen. Thaler's charges make me ill — they raise my blood pressure. Does he take us for irresponsible idiots? We would never enter into any research without the expressed consent of the parents of these children."

In answer to Thaler's accusation that hospitals are using charity patients "as guinea pigs," Dr. Hammond said:

"We have no idea here which patients are paying for state care—or how much they are paying—or which are here at the expense of the state.

"My department — the New York State Department of Mental Health — (Continued on Page 11)

State School Denies Testing on Patients

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tal Hygiene — has an office in Manhattan with this information, but we treat each individual equally at Willowbrook.”

Hammond added that parents of some children at the school have lost contact with the child. Some of them cannot easily be located.

“These children would not even be considered for the research experiments,” he emphasized.

Dr. Hammond added that parents are given a detailed outline “of the risks and safeguards involved.” He explained that experimental groups total 20 children — “usually less” — and are formed four times a year.

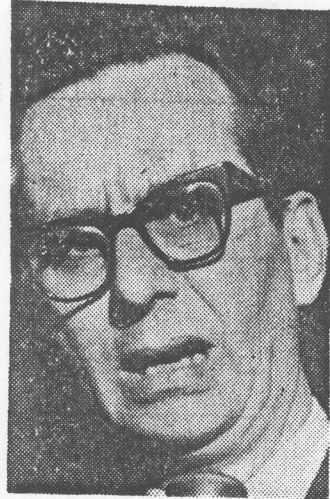
“The children rarely become ill as a result of the injections,” he said, “and not one had died.” He added that the few who had experienced illness suffered only mild attacks.

“This research is vital,” Dr. Hammond said, adding that the incidence of hepatitis among patients has dropped from 5 per cent in 1954 to 0.5 per cent presently. The ratio of employees suffering from hepatitis has similarly decreased, he said.

“Hepatitis is internationally common to all institutions or wherever large numbers of individuals live together,” he explained. “The armed services, for example, are plagued with hundreds of cases each year.”

Dr. Hammond added that children have a natural, high resistance to hepatitis, which can be extremely serious for adults.

“Very often the private phy-



SEN. THALER

“Gamma globulin,” he explained, “contains immune bodies to all virus diseases. It is given to immunize, prevent or lessen an attack of a virus, including hepatitis.”

Thaler’s attack on Willowbrook was contained in a lengthy resolution condemning the medical profession which he presented for more than an hour in the Senate.

In his oration, Thaler said he would name names of doctors he deems guilty of misconduct “in a few days.”

He also charged that 21 paying patients in the Brooklyn Jewish Hospital were injected with live cancer cells, without their knowledge or consent. Two doctors who “experimented” on 600 patients, he said, were put on probation for a year.

Thaler alleged that “thousands are being used as medical guinea pigs,” adding that 95 per cent of all medical research in the city is conducted on charity patients in municipal hospitals.

The Senate ultimately referred Thaler’s resolution to the Senate Finance Committee.

sicians treating children, as well as their parents, mistake it for the gripe,” he said.

Children run a low fever and are seldom jaundiced by the disease, unlike adults. He added that in children, laboratory testing is often the only way to identify the disease.

He compared the hepatitis research at Willowbrook to the measles and polio vaccines now widely used, adding:

“Willowbrook was one of the many institutions involved in developing the vaccine. Research for this and the Salk vaccine for polio was conducted in the very same way; through injections of consenting patients or the consent of their legal guardians.

“If we could not conduct research of this type, there would never have been vaccines to combat disease.”

He also stressed the fact that all the hepatitis research at Willowbrook is conducted by the New York University School of Medicine, under the supervision of Dr. Saul Krugman, chairman and professor of pediatrics.

“It is supervised by the Office of the Surgeon General of the U.S. Army.”