

NYU scientist reports hepatitis vaccine near

By BRIAN SULLIVAN

A major step in the development of an anti-hepatitis vaccine is the result of studies carried out in a special unit at Willowbrook State School, it was reported today by a New York University scientist.

Dr. Saul Krugman, chairman of the pediatrics department of the NYU Medical Center, reported the successful immunization of humans against the most serious form of hepatitis.

The disease is always present at Willowbrook State School, but in children, Dr. Krugman said, it is very mild.

Four individuals exposed to it were given two inoculations of a serum and none contracted the disease. Five of 10 persons given one inoculation also were protected. Normally, 96 to 100 per cent are attacked by the disease when exposed.

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If a vaccine is developed, perhaps within five to nine years, the disease—serum hepatitis—could be controlled in much the same way that polio vaccine has virtually eradicated polio in this country.

"We do not yet have an effective vaccine," Krugman said in an interview, "but the door is being pushed ajar. Hopefully, a vaccine would be as effective as the polio and measles vaccines."

Hepatitis is a virus-caused disease, attacking the liver and causing jaundice, nausea, weakness and other symptoms.

Generally, there are two kinds of hepatitis, serum and infectious. Serum hepatitis can be transmitted in blood transfusions or from contaminated needles. Infectious hepatitis is generally spread through infected

food or water or person-to-person.

But these traditional distinctions are now being found to overlap, with some serum hepatitis spreading through direct or indirect contact. Serum hepatitis is usually more serious, especially in adults. It can be fatal.

Krugman said his research team used a serum made from the serum hepatitis strain of virus, called MS2 virus, and mixed it with distilled water, then boiled the solution for one minute.

This preparation, Krugman

said, destroyed the ability of the substance to infect a recipient with the disease, but did not impede its ability to stimulate production of antibodies against serum hepatitis.

Antibodies are disease-fighting agents produced in the body when it is exposed to foreign substances. Two injections of the boiled serum proved to protect the individuals from hepatitis, and produce antibodies against it.

While only a few persons were involved and further work is necessary, Krugman said, the results are very significant.