Demonstration, by Gel-Dififusion, of an Instance of Drug Allergy

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Skin tests are useless in patients with drug allergies. This is not surprising, considering (1) the haptenic nature of drugs (2), that probably cellular antibodies only are formed, and (3) that humoral antibodies, if produced at all, may have been formed to a drug-body protein conjugate (R. Augustin, 1955). Apart from R. Hoigné's light scattering method (1956) which is still under test, an objective test method is thus lacking. The following experimental results seem therefore worth reporting.

Through the courtesy of Dr. Mowbray (St. Mary's Hospital) serum from a patient allergic to phenolphthaleine was obtained. The fresh serum was said to form a precipitate with phenolphthaleine. Although this could not be repeated a fortnight later, a somewhat diffuse but clearly marked precipitation line was formed in agar when phenolphthaleine mixed and incubated with normal human serum, was allowed to diffuse against the patient's serum. Phenolphthaleine itself, in a large range of different concentrations, did not give a visible reaction. Attempts to imitate this reaction with pollen extracts and reagents, and other drugs versus the serum of sensitive patients, have so far failed.