

Records

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Glaser EM, Hervey GR (1951). The prevention of seasickness with hyoscine, Benadryl and Phenergan. *Lancet* 2:749-753.

Key passages

The drugs were given in indistinguishable capsules. They were kept in identical tins inconspicuously marked with numbers, and the issuing was done entirely by numbers. The code to these numbers was kept in sealed envelopes at the Admiralty and at the Department of Experimental Medicine, Cambridge. Nobody connected with the experiment knew the code until after the results had been worked out. The remaining capsules were then checked by qualitative chemical analysis which showed that there had been no error in the coding. The subjects of the experiment were told that various safe drugs would be tested, and that the same drug might or might not be issued on different occasions, but they were not told that a dummy substance was included. These precautions were well justified, because those who were seasick sometimes blamed the drug, but it was subsequently found that the "drug" was usually the placebo. Holling et al. (1944) also observed that experimental subjects tended to think that drugs had made them sick.

Experimental Routine

Four tests were made forty-eight hours apart, and in each test a quarter of the subjects (17 men) received each drug. The men were divided into twenty-four groups at random, and each group received each substance in turn in one of the twenty-four possible sequences. This was designed to cancel out the effects of variations in the sea conditions on different days, and of such possibilities as adaptation to the motion or modification of the action of one drug by another given forty-eight hours earlier.