TECHNICAL METHODS

A MACHINE FOR WASHING WASSERMANN TUBES

BY

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One of the most irksome tasks in a pathological department is the washing of test-tubes. Particularly is this so when a thousand or more tubes have to be washed at the end of a long day doing Wassermann and Kahn tests. If the task is postponed to the next day the cleaning process becomes more difficult. It seemed that a machine was needed for the mechanical rinsing of tubes immediately after the conclusion of the tests. The apparatus to be described has been in use in this laboratory for several months and serves as an efficient rinsing machine.

Description of Apparatus

Test-tubes are contained in revolving circular racks sprayed from below by a system of water jets. The racks are 7 in. in diameter and have bottoms of 18-gauge copper wire mesh, six to the inch. Each rack is divided into four compartments by partitions radiating from a central hollow shaft. The jets are thirty or so in number, and so arranged as to spray a sector of the bottom of the rack immediately above. One row of jets is inclined at an angle—this provides a lateral thrust and maintains a slow revolution of the rack.

Method of Use

A rack is filled with tubes placed upside down (280 $\frac{1}{8}$ -in. tubes or 160 $\frac{1}{2}$ -in. tubes) and the glass cover (an inverted mouse jar) is placed in position. The tubes are sufficiently rinsed after the water has run for two or three minutes, when another full rack is placed in position and the process is repeated. It is advisable to have at least half a dozen racks. The racks are partly drained and then placed in the hot air oven. Given a sufficient number of racks, the tubes may be left in position until required again.

The method is not suitable for very dirty or greasy tubes requiring drastic chemical treatment,

but is suitable for large-scale mechanical rinsing. In my experience the tubes emerge bright and clean from the drying oven in spite of a very hard water supply.

The machine illustrated was made by Messrs. Jackson, of 348, City Road, London, E.C.1.