

## Traces Physical Ails to Emotion

*Medicine*

A pain in the stomach is not always the real condition that sends people to a physician, Dr. George S. Stevenson, New York psychiatrist, told members of the American Medical Association. The pain or other physical ailment may be real enough, but back of it very often an upset emotional state may be found, Dr. Stevenson explained. He interviewed 150 patients at the Cornell Clinic and found that in many cases there was a big difference between the patient's complaint and his motive in coming to the doctor.

The emotional or mental problems lying back of the pain or loss of appetite complained of are often more serious than the physical ailment, which may be entirely due to the mental or emotional state. Fear of disease, especially cancer, ranks high

among these factors. Worry about one's condition, unstable personality, sex maladjustments, death of some member of the family, identification with illness of another (for instance, cancer of a relative), doctor's statements, financial worries, unhappy marital situation and uncongenial home were, in the order given, the emotional problems that brought the 150 patients to the Cornell Clinic for relief of some physical ailment.

These mental and emotional difficulties cannot be ignored in treating the patients. Sometimes psychiatric treatment is required. Ignoring the emotional difficulty may drive the patient to the cultist, who, in the absence of scientific medical training, seizes on this factor and thus gets a firm hold on the patient, Dr. Stevenson declared.

*Science News-Letter, July 13, 1929*

## Germ's Feed on Synthetic Fare

*Bacteriology*

Beef bouillon, agar, peptone broth and gelatine have so far been the staple articles of diet for disease germs in the laboratories of scientists who were growing them and studying their ways and manners. Now the bacteria are to be put upon a synthetic diet which, whatever the germs may think of it, will certainly make life much easier for bacteriologists and other scientists and will help doctors diagnose diseases with more certainty.

The chemical composition and bacteriological uses of some of these synthetic media on which germs are grown were explained at a recent meeting of bacteriologists here by Dr. Alice T. Merrill of the U. S. Hygienic Laboratory. Dr. Merrill is herself a chemist who has developed some of the synthetic media about which she spoke.

"The problems relating to bacteria and their activities are complex and difficult enough in themselves to investigate. It is, therefore, scarcely an advantage to add to the problem the complications and unknown pitfalls of culture media . . . which are of unknown composition and which may vary in composition with each new lot that is made," said Dr. Merrill.

The importance of this new step in bacteriology cannot be underestimated and goes much farther than being a labor-saving device for scientists. The diagnosis of many diseases de-

pends on delicate bacteriological tests to find the germ causing the disease. Because of the variations in the media with which these tests are made, the tests themselves are not entirely reliable. In making the tests bacteriologists are sometimes working with two more or less variable factors. If one of these can be standardized, the determination of the other, which is the "x" of the problem, becomes much easier and much more accurate.

*Science News-Letter, July 13, 1929*

## Recommends Cancer Centers

*Medicine*

Organized cancer centers should be established by the U. S. Government, where full-time specialists and research workers will devote themselves to the study of this disease and acquire special skill in its treatment.

This recommendation has been made to the Senate Commerce Committee by Dr. Ellice McDonald, research worker of Philadelphia.

A special cancer sub-committee of the Senate Commerce Committee will hold hearings soon after the return of the Senate the latter part of August, on the Harris resolution recently passed, calling for the investigation into the whole subject of cancer work with a view to discovering what the United States Government should do to further it in this country.

Dr. McDonald's letter calls attention to the cancer work done by the British Empire and Belgium.

## Anemia Hereditary?

*Medicine*

That pernicious anemia may run in families appears from a study made of relatives of persons suffering from the disease by Dr. H. Milton Conner of Rochester, Minn. Lack of hydrochloric acid in the stomach, which is a prominent feature of the disease, has a tendency to appear in several members of a family, Dr. Conner reported to the American Medical Association.

The results do not prove that there is any hereditary aspect of pernicious anemia, Dr. Conner carefully pointed out, but they apparently show a family tendency to the development of one of the most important features of the disease.

In his study 154 blood relatives of patients with pernicious anemia were examined. Of these, 25 per cent. showed a lack of hydrochloric acid, as against 15.2 per cent. in a control group tested. The condition was present in 46.1 per cent. of a selected group between 40 to 49 years of age, the period at which pernicious anemia is most common, but occurred in only 16.2 per cent. of the control group of this age.

*Science News-Letter, July 13, 1929*

No method of preserving fish for museums, to retain their natural color and shape, has been devised, but a recent method of making casts and coloring them with nitro-cellulose lacquer produces lifelike exhibits.

In Belgium the requirements for a grant for a cancer center are:

1. Complete surgical service with facilities for consultation for cancer patients.

2. Installation of machines for deep X-Ray therapy, consisting of at least two pieces of apparatus, with a minimum capacity of 200 kilovolts.

3. An amount of radium of not less than 500 milligrams.

4. A laboratory where research work, examinations and necessary analyses for diagnosis and treatment shall be carried out.

In Great Britain, Dr. McDonald points out, financial assistance is given cancer research centers in order to keep them at maximum efficiency. Also individual cancer research workers are given financial support, under approved conditions.

*Science News-Letter, July 13, 1929*