MEDICINE

Fight Cancer by Inducing It Is Suggestion in Vienna

New Line of Attack Would Involve Developing Of Method Like Vaccination for Producing Immunity

A NOVEL and daring line of attack on cancer—a sort of vaccination—is suggested by Dr. Sigismund Peller of Vienna.

Reduce cancer deaths by causing more cases of cancer, is the paradoxical suggestion he makes in a report to the *Lancet* (Sept. 5).

By deliberately inducing cancer of the skin, and then curing it, Dr. Peller believes the present high mortality from cancer can be reduced. The idea is something like vaccination, the method of giving a mild attack of cowpox to avoid a possibly fatal attack of smallpox.

Dr. Peller's suggestion has not yet been tried. It is presented to fellow scientists for consideration in their plans for future campaigns against cancer. It would not help, of course, those already suffering from cancer. If cancer does not yield to present methods of attack, some bold disease fighter may decide to follow Dr. Peller's suggestion, rash though it seems at present.

Local Treatment Needed

Whether or not Dr. Peller is correct, all the evidence at present, as the editor of the *Lancet* points out, is in favor of treating cancer locally, at whatever place it may appear. It is to be hoped that Dr. Peller's theories, promising though they may sound, will not make doctors or patients doubt the need for treatment, by surgery, X-rays or radium, at a stage when cancer is still localized.

Dr. Peller's theory is that cancer is a general disease which may appear anywhere. The particular spot on the body where it does appear depends on some local irritating factor. If the irritation is applied to the stomach, for example, cancer will develop in the stomach, but other parts of the body will escape. One way to fight cancer, it follows, would be to prevent irritation which could start the local development of the general disease. This has been attempted, without much success, because so little is yet known of the various irritating factors which may start cancer.

Consequently, Dr. Peller suggests the alternate line of attack. Assuming that cancer will develop somewhere, perhaps in an inaccessible spot where it cannot be detected until too late to cure it, make it start, by suitable irritation, on a place like the skin where it can be detected at once and cured. This, in Dr. Peller's opinion, would lessen or prevent the likelihood of cancer developing on some part of the body where it cannot be so successfully treated.

The results of such a daring procedure cannot be foretold on the basis of present knowledge, the editor of the *Lancet* points out. Studies of animals have shown that cancer of the skin is not likely to develop if breast cancer is present, and breast cancer is not likely to develop when the animal has a skin cancer. The records do not show whether this antagonism holds true for other organs of the body, as Dr. Peller assumes may be the case.

The heroic method of using human guinea pigs is fortunately not needed to answer this question, since there is material available in the form of persons who have suffered from skin cancer and been cured. A careful inquiry into their subsequent histories, the *Lancet's* editor says, would show whether or not they have later been attacked by cancer in other organs more frequently or less frequently than their contemporaries in the rest of the population.

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ENGINEERING

Trees Cut Fuel Cost When Used as Windbreak

IF YOU own a home, trees can be something more than a source of firewood or shade. They will save on winter fuel if used as a windbreak, reports W. K. Williams of the U. S. Forest Service. When cold winds reach a velocity of more than 20 miles an hour it is found that an unprotected house needs three times the heating requirements of a tree-protected home.

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CULTURE LINK

This bull with a humped back was an animal that did not exist in Mesopotamia, and so his image found there indicates contact with India in ancient times.

ARCHAEOLOGY

Humped Bull Links Ancient India and Mesopotamia

A 5000-YEAR-OLD picture of a bull with curving horns and a monstrous hump on his back, unearthed in Mesopotamia, is important archaeological evidence, linking two of the world's great ancient civilizations—India and Mesopotamia.

The humped bull pictured on a green steatite vase has been found in ruins of Tell Agrab, old Mesopotamian city, Prof. Henri Frankfort, director of its Iraq Expedition, has just reported to the Oriental Institute. Since the humped bull was not a native beast of Mesopotamia, but was a familiar figure on the art of India in that day, the pictured animal is considered good evidence that a close relationship between India and Mesopotamia existed.

Another fragment of the same Mesopotamian vase is decorated with a picture of a Sumerian with large hooked nose, typical of the people living in Mesopotamian cities in 3000 B.C. Thus the vase combined in its art a picture of a native inhabitant and a foreign animal.

The land that lay between Mesopotamia and India was far less arid in ancient times than today, Prof. Frankfort pointed out, and he believes travelers went from one center of civilization to the other both by land and by sea.

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