

DENTISTRY

Pulling Wisdom Teeth Urged As Aid in Preventing Cancer

Dental Meeting Also Discusses Methods For Saving Teeth, Prevention of Pyorrhea, Surgery for Abscess

EXTRACTION of wisdom teeth as an aid in preventing cancer was urged by Dr. Douglas Quick of Cancer Memorial Hospital at the Greater New York Dental Meeting.

The area back of the wisdom tooth, technically known as the third molar, is one of the most frequent cancer sites in the mouth, Dr. Quick said. The position of the tooth makes it difficult to clean and the patch of mucous membrane just back of it is likely to become swollen and inflamed and the constant irritation may lead to cancer.

When there is any question in the dentist's mind about removing this tooth, Dr. Quick believes the decision should be for removal.

By watching for other conditions that can lead to cancer, such as jagged teeth and badly fitting plates, or false teeth, the dentist can do much to help prevent cancer, Dr. Quick pointed out. One outstanding tooth where the teeth next to it are missing can also be a source of irritation that may lead to cancer. Plates must be changed as the shape of the mouth and jaws changes with advancing years in order to avoid irritation. Pyorrhea and chronic infections in the mouth and especially around the gums add to the cancer hazard.

Some persons are much more susceptible to the irritation of tobacco smoke than others, Dr. Quick said. A distinction should be made between the danger of smoking and the danger of excessive smoking. It is the latter particularly which increases the cancer hazard.

Could Save Half

More than half the teeth extracted after the age of 50 years, and nearly half of those pulled before 50, could be saved, Dr. Grace Rogers Spalding of Birmingham, Mich., told fellow dentists. The saving of teeth could be accomplished, she indicated, by paying attention to diseases of the gums and structures that support the teeth.

Among the causes of these diseases Dr. Spalding listed inherited factors; defects of nutrition; outside chemical

elements; physical force and energies; parasites (germs); social and psychological influences.

The inherited factors may cause abnormal arrangement, shape and formation of the teeth. These cannot be prevented, perhaps, but they can and should be corrected promptly, Dr. Spalding pointed out. She advised massage of the gums by the patient to stimulate faulty circulation of blood such as is commonly found in these diseases.

Eating is also important in preventing the diseases that lead to loss of teeth. The teeth must be used to be healthy, and too soft foods do not give them enough use. Eating too much, too little, too fast or failing to eat a balanced diet are other possible causes of gum diseases which Dr. Spalding suggested the dentist should investigate and correct in each patient.

Should Go to Bed

Having a tooth pulled may seem a minor matter to people who pride themselves on their ruggedness. In case of difficult extractions, however, even these rugged individuals should be ordered to bed, Dr. Thomas Connor of Atlanta, Ga., said.

Dr. Connor did not refer specifically to President Roosevelt but some of his remarks were said to throw light on the difficulties which the President has been through recently with his infected tooth.

There is always some infection after these difficult extractions and shock "is more or less extensive," Dr. Connor said. He believes such patients need rest in bed in order to recuperate properly and to avoid a spread of the infection or other difficulties. He also advised that the dentist see them 24 or 48 hours after the extraction because at this time first evidence of undue infection can be detected.

Nervous patients are likely to go to bed after a tooth extraction without being told, but the patient who prides himself on being able to stand pain and who claims he cannot miss a day or two from business should be ordered to bed in

spite of his protests, to avoid further complications.

Operations for Abscesses

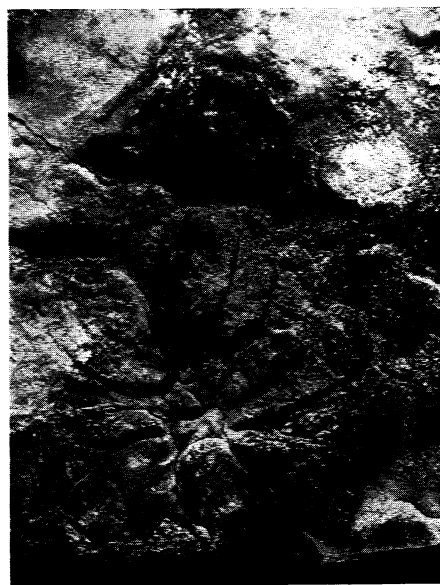
Instead of pulling teeth in cases of abscesses, dentists were advised to operate and treat infected areas. A high degree of success with this method, with saving of the involved teeth, was reported by Dr. Ralph F. Sommer of the University of Michigan.

Complete regrowth of bone after the operation takes place in about ten months in areas of ordinary size, Dr. Sommer reported. It may be possible in future, he said, to hasten the regrowth or regeneration by bone powder implants, but at present this procedure is still in the experimental stage.

"The dental need of the people of this country is beyond comprehension," Dr. Sommer said in commenting on thousands of full mouth X-rays he has made annually during the last fifteen years on patients of all walks of life and from nearly every state of the Union.

Pyorrhea Prevented

Pyorrhea can be prevented by keeping the teeth in position so that the bite is normal, Dr. J. A. Loughry of Cleveland said. He added that dentists would come to be looked on as "real benefactors and not (*Turn to Page 398*)



OLDEST INHABITANT

Easily eligible for charter membership in an Association of Oldest Inhabitants is the long-departed jellyfish that left this imprint in beach sand that later hardened into a slab of rock in the Grand Canyon of Arizona.

the phosphorus with the heat of an electric furnace.

Sand, rock containing calcium phosphorus, and coke are fed into the electric furnace. In the high temperature of the carbon arc (6,620 degrees Fahrenheit) the three raw products react to create carbon monoxide and elemental phosphorus in the form of a vapor. Because the phosphorus readily and dangerously combines with air, the whole industrial operation must be carried out under reduced pressure or else in a vapor of hydrogen or nitrogen. Purification of the phosphorus vapor condensed under water can be accomplished by melting the element and stirring it. Or certain oxidizing agents like potash can be used to remove impurities.

With the air still excluded, the purified phosphorus can be sealed in steel drums or even tank cars and shipped.

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just necessary evils" if they admitted that, with the full cooperation of the patient, pyorrhea and loss of teeth is not necessary and tooth decay can be kept to a minimum.

Dr. Loughry stressed the importance of replacing lost teeth. Sometimes it is necessary to extract some remaining teeth in order to secure a normal bite. The teeth, he explained, work in relation to each other. If even one is missing the whole chewing system is thrown off balance. All the teeth should be used evenly in order to exercise the gums and thus stimulate the supply of blood to gums and teeth. When there is a good blood supply, the teeth and gums are more resistant to decay, infection and other injurious agents.

Jawbone Disease Masquerades

Many cases of pain that appears due to sinus or ear trouble may be due to disease of the lower jawbone, Dr. James B. Costen of Washington University School of Medicine at St. Louis explained.

Among the symptoms traced to this jaw condition are burning tongue, dizziness, deafness, stuffy sensation within the ear, buzzing and grating noises, dull pain within the ears and sinus-like pain. Gnashing of the teeth or partial lockjaw is a serious handicap to successful treatment, and if measurements for artificial teeth are made while this symptom is present, there is apt to be a relapse of the original condition.

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MEDICINE

Unethical Not to Patent Medical Discoveries

"IT IS unethical not to patent medical inventions," Arthur G. Connolly, patent attorney of Wilmington, Del., declares in the leading article in the scientific journal, *Science*. (Oct. 29)

The reasons for this conclusion, which Mr. Connolly himself points out may startle many persons, are the following:

1. Even if a physician refrains from patenting a medical invention and merely reports it in a medical journal, he does not necessarily prevent others from patenting it.

2. If the invention is patented by others, it may be developed in a way that will harm the public.

3. If the invention is not patented, there can be very little control over the quality of the product or of the price at which it is sold.

The physician who wishes his inven-

tion to be of greatest service to the public will achieve that end best, Mr. Connolly believes, by patenting his invention and then developing the patent for the public benefit.

Mr. Connolly suggests that it would be helpful for the medical profession to establish a central committee which would protect by patents the inventions of the profession. This same committee could develop the patents so as to safeguard the interests of both public and physicians.

This suggestion is somewhat similar to the proposal recently made by Dr. Morris Fishbein, editor of the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, that that medical association might organize a non-profit holding corporation to administer patents in the medical and health fields.

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PUBLIC HEALTH

Climate May Play Part In Infantile Paralysis Immunity

THE VIRUS of infantile paralysis is widely scattered throughout the world, existing even in places where epidemics of the disease rarely occur, Drs. N. Paul Hudson and E. H. Lennette of Ohio State University and the University of Chicago reported to the American Society of Tropical Medicine.

Climate, it appears from their studies, may play a part in bringing about a natural immunity or resistance to the disease.

The two bacteriologists examined the blood of small groups of persons living in such widely separated places as Nashville, Tenn.; Liberia; Peiping, China; the Philippine Islands; inland Brazil; and Thursday Island, Australia. Most of these persons, at least four-fifths, had in their blood substances which could neutralize the virus of infantile paralysis. Presence of such neutralizing substances in the blood usually means that the person has previously had the disease or at least has gotten some of the virus into his system and has developed im-

munity or resistance to the disease. Consequently it appears that the virus of the disease is pretty widely scattered around the world.

Epidemics of infantile paralysis are uncommon in the regions in which Drs. Hudson and Lennette made their blood studies, although occasional sporadic cases occur, or the disease may be endemic, a few cases always occurring but with no epidemics.

Since most of these places are in the tropical or subtemperate zone, the two bacteriologists suggest that climate affects the relation between the virus and man. Man in these climates apparently can play host to the virus, which is a parasite, so that it does not die off, and at the same time is able to build up an immunity to it so that he rarely gets sick with infantile paralysis.

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The wild rooster, jungle forefather of domestic fowls, cannot crow so loudly as the barnyard cock.