

MEDICINE

Heart Affliction Seen as Cause of a Kind of Insanity

Malta Fever Reported in United States; Diabetes May Be Caused by Parathyroid Glands; Fig Sap Useful

THE OLD-TIME novelist frequently saw a broken heart as a cause of insanity. Today a modern scientist traces one form of insanity to a physical heart affliction.

Investigations which seem to link the widespread mental disease known as dementia precox with rheumatic heart disease were exhibited before the American Association for the Advancement of Science by Dr. Walter L. Bruetsch of the Indiana University School of Medicine and the Central State Hospital at Indianapolis. The hearts and brains of 8 out of every 100 dementia precox victims that Dr. Bruetsch was able to examine after death showed signs of a chronic rheumatic infection, he reported.

The findings suggest, Dr. Bruetsch said, that the large group of mental disorders which today go by the name of dementia precox will in future turn out to be a number of different diseases with different causes.

Dr. Bruetsch's findings also suggest that the old time novelist who ascribed mental disease to emotional upsets was pretty far off in his diagnosis. Even modern psychiatrists who hold that mental disease is always the result of emotional or environmental stress are wrong, in Dr. Bruetsch's opinion. Changes in the brain tissue, such as the rheumatic condition he found, he indicated, may be responsible for mental disease rather than disturbances in the mental activity of the brain.

Prevent Congenital Syphilis

Prevention of the pitiful affliction of syphilis in unborn infants by making blood tests routinely on all expectant mothers was urged by Drs. Alfred C. Beck and William T. Daily of the Long Island College of Medicine, Brooklyn, N. Y. When the mother is properly treated for syphilis during the months before the child is born, a living, healthy child will be born in 90 per cent. of the cases.

The germ which causes the disease gets into the unborn baby's body from the mother's body. During the early part of the infant's life in its mother's body

it is somewhat protected by covering membranes which act, the Brooklyn physicians believe, as a barrier against the germ. Later this barrier breaks down and unless the mother is treated for syphilis the unborn child is sure to contract the disease. This may lead to its being born dead or to its being born with the disease.

The mother usually has syphilis in a much milder form during the child-bearing months, it was pointed out. Because of this, the disease may not be detected unless blood tests are made. Having a child, in fact, appears to protect the mother from the worst ravages of the disease. Drs. Beck and Daily suggested that certain regular changes in women's sex organs, which also take place during the first months of child-bearing, may produce the factor that protects the mother against the disease.

Malta Fever in U. S.

Malta fever sounds like a strange disease that might be picked up by the traveler in foreign lands, but there is plenty of opportunity for acquiring this unpleasant ailment in the United States, it appears from the report of Miss Alice C. Evans, senior bacteriologist of the U. S. Public Health Service's National Institute of Health. Miss Evans has herself been a chronic sufferer from the malady, acquired in the course of her investigations of it.

In one year about 2,000 cases were reported in this country. There are no figures on the actual total number, which may be much higher than the reported number. Chronic cases rarely are diagnosed correctly, Miss Evans pointed out. Some patients had had the disease for 20 years before the correct diagnosis was made. Symptoms of chronic Malta fever, or undulant fever or brucellosis as it is also known, are exhaustion, insomnia, irritability and a great variety of aches and pains. Because of the symptoms the disease is often wrongly diagnosed as neurasthenia. A mild attack of the disease may be diagnosed as "flu." More severe attacks may be confused with

tuberculosis, typhoid fever, malaria or rheumatism.

No specific cure of proved efficiency exists, Miss Evans declared. It is, therefore, necessary to learn how to avoid getting the disease.

Brucellosis—that is the name Miss Evans uses—is caused by a germ that has the name *Brucella*. These germs attack cattle, hogs and goats as well as man. The relation between the animal and human disease was established by Miss Evans' pioneer research.

Farmers and veterinarians who handle infected animals and slaughterhouse workers who handle infected carcasses get the disease because the germs may pass through their skin, particularly if there are cuts or scratches. Other persons get it by drinking milk from infected animals.

Proper pasteurization or boiling of all milk, Miss Evans declared, would prevent brucellosis in all persons except those whose occupation brings them in direct contact with infected animals. To protect the latter as well as the milk drinking public, the U. S. Department of Agriculture is carrying on an extensive campaign to eradicate the disease from cattle. There is as yet no similar campaign to control the disease in goats and hogs. Miss Evans pointed out that cattle may become infected from contact with infected hogs.

Diabetes From Glands

Suggestion that other glands besides the pancreas are responsible for the increase in blood sugar that is diabetes was contained in the paper presented by Drs. Oscar Riddle and Louis B. Dotti of the Carnegie Institution of Washington. Extracts of the parathyroid gland of the throat were found to increase blood sugar in pigeons. The effect was more marked in birds on normal diet than it was on fasting specimens.

Fig Sap For Parasites

Possibility of a new and potent means for combating parasitic worms of human beings and animals is suggested by a report presented by Conrado F. Asenjo of the School of Tropical Medicine, San Juan, P. R. In the milky juice, or latex, of the creeping fig, Mr. Asenjo found a protein substance that attacks the parasites, literally digesting the skins off them. Concentrations as low as one-eighth of one per cent. were found effective.

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Honey has the same bad effect as any other sugar on diabetic patients.