

MEDICINE

# Operation Gives Relief In Hypertension Cases

## Severing Sympathetic Nerves Permits Flow Through Smaller Arteries; Not all Patients Benefited

**S**UCCESSFUL results in some cases from operation to relieve high blood pressure, performed on 300 patients in the past four years without a single death due to the operation, were announced by Drs. E. V. Allen and A. W. Adson, of the Mayo Clinic, at the meeting of the American College of Physicians in Cleveland.

Neither the operation described, however, nor present accepted medical treatment has entirely conquered this disease, which kills three times as many people each year as cancer, Drs. Allen and Adson pointed out.

Of the 300 patients operated on by cutting the sympathetic nerves to lessen resistance of the tiny arteries to flow of blood through them and thus to lower the blood pressure, follow-up information was available on 222. In 27 of these, "excellent" results were obtained, and in another 41 cases, the results were "fairly good." In 114 cases, the patients' blood pressure was reduced definitely and significantly for periods varying from two months to four years. Although the blood pressure in these patients subsequently rose to the high level before the operation, the doctors believe even the temporary lowering of the blood pressure was helpful. Many of these patients are still free from clinical symptoms, although the blood pressure is again high.

The operation should not be looked on as a last resort but should be performed early in the course of the high blood pressure condition, just as operation for cancer to be successful must be performed early, the doctors pointed out. Commenting on the drawbacks to both the operation and medical treatment for high blood pressure, they concluded:

"It is our impression that neurosurgical treatment (the operation) of essential hypertension has contributed substantially to the treatment of this disease. However, neither medical nor neurosurgical treatment has satisfactorily solved the problem of treatment of this malignant condition and it must be borne in mind that sympathectomy is indicated in only a small percentage of all patients with hypertension who have a progres-

sive disease. There is still great opportunity for advances in therapeutics."

*Science News Letter, April 13, 1940*

## Prevention of Anemia

**P**ERNICIOUS anemia, once hopeless disease whose victims now live out their normal lifespan, thanks to liver, can soon be prevented as well as cured. The method for doing this was announced by Dr. John M. Askey, University of Southern California School of Medicine, to the College of Physicians. Liver will be the preventive substance, as it is now the curative substance for the disease. But doctors will know which patients are going to develop pernicious anemia and will start the liver treatment in time to forestall development of the disease, Dr. Askey predicted.

"The scheme allowing the physician to suspect those who will later develop

the disease depends upon a peculiarly helpful finding," Dr. Askey said. "Lack of acid in the stomach means nothing important in an ordinary person, but in a person in whose family pernicious anemia is present it immediately puts him in the potential class. A person with acid in the stomach practically never develops pernicious anemia—even the relative with no acid may never develop the disease, but he must be observed.

"Studies of 61 relatives with stomach analyses led to the identification of ten as potential cases of pernicious anemia. Of these ten, two have developed early signs of the disease but are under adequate treatment. Several others have early signs and will be watched closely. Two relatives who refused stomach analyses three and five years later developed the disease, both with crippling disability which will permanently handicap them. It is this reluctance of normal relatives to have a stomach analysis done which is preventing accumulation of data which will help to solve the problem."

"Treatment now saves lives, but due to the insidious onset of the disease, patients often are not recognized early because they do not consult a doctor until the disease is far advanced. By the time the doctor sees them, 75% have developed damage to the nervous system, and in a small percentage there is damage



### SKID PREVENTION AT HOME

First aid to over-waxed floors: a robot "stand-in" that measures the slipperiness of floors to prevent dangerous falls invented by Edgar C. Barnes, Westinghouse industrial hygiene engineer. Slips and falls cause an estimated 350,000 industrial U.S.A. accidents each year and many home accidents. A man walking across a slippery floor is simulated by a miniature bobsled supported on three little leather runners carrying a hundred-pound weight. Pulled by a spring balance across a waxed surface, the amount of pressure required both to start it and to keep it moving is read, telling how easily a person may slip and how far the slip will carry him.