

MEDICINE

Lift Veil on Rectal Cancer

A frank approach to the problem confronting 40,000 persons attacked by cancer of the rectum this year is urged in the hope of saving these lives.

► THE AMERICAN people and their doctors, the general practitioners of the nation, are once more urged to "lift the veil of prudery," that thousands of lives may be saved.

The appeal to save lives by approaching frankly a health problem was made by Dr. Austin V. Deibert of the National Cancer Institute, U. S. Public Health Service.

Of the estimated 101,000 new cases of cancer of the digestive tract that will develop in 1950, more than 40,000 will be located in the last eight inches of the lower bowel, Dr. Deibert told members of the American College of Surgeons meeting in Boston.

About three-fourths of these, at least 30,000 patients, can be cured if diagnosis is made early, he stated.

While cancers of the stomach and small intestine are difficult to diagnose because they cannot be felt and cannot be seen without elaborate, often uncomfortable procedures, a large proportion of digestive tract cancers may be regarded as "accessible site" cancers.

"More than two out of every five cancers in the digestive tract are within reach of the physician's finger or proctoscope," Dr. Deibert stated.

The proctoscope is an instrument for inspecting the rectum.

The whole subject, he said, "is so be-

clouded by false modesty that it is difficult to discuss in plain terms.

"Through intensive effort, we have lifted the veil of prudery from syphilis tests and self examination of the breasts. We must win the right to be equally frank about rectal cancer.

"A simple examination can disclose early rectal cancer and thereby prevent unnecessary death."

Newspapers and magazines, he said, can perform a service by presenting the facts about this cancer to the public.

"We will take our greatest step toward controlling lower bowel cancer when not only physicians but the people recognize it as a controllable disease," he stated.

One of the biggest obstacles to the control of digestive tract cancers at all locations, Dr. Deibert said, is the "pessimistic attitude of the physicians themselves."

As long as this attitude prevails, the average case that comes to the surgeon will continue to be the advanced case with little hope of cure.

In an effort to overcome this attitude and promote earlier diagnosis of digestive tract cancer, the National Cancer Institute and the American Cancer Society have jointly produced a training film for physicians which was previewed at the American College of Surgeons meeting.

Science News Letter, November 4, 1950

throughout the nation are hopeful that some change in the proteins of the blood, or in the enzymes which control many of the body's chemical reactions or in the immune mechanisms of the body will give some clues to better, earlier cancer detection.

Science News Letter, November 4, 1950

ENGINEERING

Flickering Lights from Welding Machines Near End

► FLICKERING lights caused by electric welding machines can be eliminated through the use of information contained in a bulletin soon to be issued, the American Institute of Electrical Engineers was told in Oklahoma City.

Prof. M. Stanley Helm, Prof. Max A. Faucett and Marvin Fisher, Jr., of the University of Illinois, explained that they had computed tables showing the size of wires and the amount of current needed to prevent the flicker. Previously power companies have had to guess at these requirements. Electric motor loads as far as five miles away have important bearing on three-phase power lines, they said.

Science News Letter, November 4, 1950



"UNCHARTED AREAS"—A technician in the Measurements Laboratory of the General Electric Company's Meter and Instrument Divisions recently opened in Lynn, Mass., prepares to plate a part of a measuring device in the inorganic finish laboratory. A special ventilating system changes the air in this area 67 times an hour. The laboratory is dedicated to the "exploration of uncharted areas in the field of electrical measurements".

MEDICINE

38,000 Stomach Cancers

► SOME 38,000 Americans will develop stomach cancer this year, Dr. J. R. Heller, Jr., director of the National Cancer Institute, declared in Chicago.

Only one out of every five of this year's stomach cancer victims will have their cancers diagnosed early enough for them to have a good chance of survival. The reason is that stomach cancer is "notorious" for not showing any symptoms in its early, curable stages.

Right now many of the 38,000 are apparently perfectly well, going about their business unaware of the danger that threatens them. The same is true to only a slightly less extent of many others who will develop other kinds of cancer this year. Some of these others may be sick and going to their doctors. But their symptoms are vague, or could come from many conditions besides cancer.

A cancer detection test, or several cancer detection and diagnostic tests, are needed to save these lives. One is needed to detect cancer patients among the apparently well. Another is needed to help diagnose cancer in cases where the symptoms and findings are not clear. Separate tests may be needed to diagnose different kinds of cancers and those located in different parts of the body.

In Chicago at the first Conference on Cancer Diagnostic Tests more than a hundred research scientists met to evaluate present cancer tests and to determine what lines of research would produce better ones.

"No test yet reported is completely specific for cancer," Dr. Heller stated at the National Cancer Institute-sponsored meeting.

Perhaps no general cancer diagnostic test will ever be discovered. But National Cancer Institute scientists and many others