

MEDICINE

Multiple Sclerosis Diet

► PATIENTS WITH multiple sclerosis might be helped by a diet low in fat, particularly if started on the diet early in the course of the disease.

Research suggesting this is reported by Dr. R. L. Swank of McGill University, Montreal, in the *Archives of Neurology and Psychiatry* (69, 91—1953).

Dr. Swank has had 47 patients on a low fat diet for periods of from two and a half to four years. The patients were also given drugs to relieve nervous tension and various other kinds of treatment as necessary in each case.

Of 34 patients whose disease was still in early stages, 25 showed slight to pronounced improvement, six showed no change and three got slightly worse.

The 13 patients whose disease was in a late or progressive stage showed no signs of improvement in physical performance during an average period of three years on the low fat diet. However, the worsening spells were milder and the average interval between these attacks lengthened from 18 months before the diet treatment to 66 months during the treatment.

The patients in the earlier stages of the disease also had these worsening spells, or

exacerbations, while on the diet, but the interval between attacks was lengthened for them, too.

Dr. Swank does not claim that any patients were cured by the diet but he was impressed by the general improvement in the patients, and their increased ability to work and make a living in spite of mild attacks.

The diet he gave his patients provided less than 40 grams, or little over one ounce, of fat daily. In the last year, milk fat was excluded and replaced by animal or other hard fat such as margarine and shortening.

Why the diet helps is not known. Dr. Swank and other scientists in earlier studies had found that the amount of multiple sclerosis seemed to be greater in periods and regions where fat consumption was high and in dairying regions where much milk and fat was consumed.

Whether fat plays a part in causing the disease and how helpful a low fat diet may be needs further research. Because multiple sclerosis has so many ups and downs and affects so many parts of the nervous system, with consequent varying symptoms and disabilities, it take a long time to determine the value of a given treatment.

Science News Letter, July 4, 1953

Southeast, which doesn't need abnormally warm winters, didn't have one. There it was about as usual.

Science News Letter, July 4, 1953

• RADIO

Saturday, July 11, 1953, 3:15-3:30 p.m. EDT
"Adventures in Science" with Watson Davis, director of Science Service, over the CBS Radio Network. Check your local CBS station.

Prof. Memelaos Dimitri Hassialis, professor of mineral engineering and executive officer of the School of Mines, Columbia University Engineering School, will discuss "More Riches From the Earth."

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SURGERY

Graft Dead Man's Artery

► SUCCESSFUL TRANSPLANTATION of a six-inch-long piece of aorta, main artery of the body, is announced by Drs. Michael E. De Bakey and Denton A. Cooley of Houston, Tex., in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* (June 20).

The transplant came from the body of a 21-year-old man who had died of injuries. It had been stored at near freezing temperature for six days.

It was grafted into the body of a 46-year-old county sheriff who went back to his duties as sheriff about a month after the operation, and was still well and working when last heard from four months after the operation.

The sheriff got the graft, in an operation taking four hours and 40 minutes, because his own aorta had ballooned out into a "huge" aneurysm, or sac. This sac was about eight inches long and about eight inches across at its greatest diameter. It was probably caused by syphilis.

Located behind the heart at about the level of the diaphragm, it had pushed the stomach and food passage, or esophagus, forward and to the left and had eroded the bodies of five vertebrae. Constant, sharp and severe pain in the lower back, left lower abdomen and groin, relieved only by opiates, brought him to the hospital.

During the operation the aorta was

clamped shut for 45 minutes while the diseased section with the big sac was cut out and the transplant stitched in place. This meant that for three-quarters of an hour blood circulation through the aorta was stopped. In spite of this, the patient's spinal cord, kidneys and other organs showed no signs of lasting damage from lack of blood.

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METEOROLOGY

Weather Records Fall In Unusual Year

► IT SEEMS that everything about the weather is unusual this year. Last winter was the second warmest on record, the Weather Bureau said.

January was the warmest January on record.

The nation's weighted temperature average for the three months of December, January and February was 36.7 degrees, 3.1 degrees above normal for the past 60 years when records were kept. January, at 37.9 degrees, was 5.8 degrees above normal.

Only the winter of 1933-34 was warmer, the Bureau says. But in that year the Northeast got as much as 8 degrees below normal, while last winter the warm weather was practically nationwide. Only the