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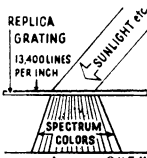
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MEDICINE

Health Problems in U. S.

Medical evidence points to the "American way of life" as an important factor in the high incidence of atherosclerosis, the number one killer among diseases in the United States.

► IT MAY be the "American way of life" that causes the high incidence of atherosclerosis in the United States, a doctor suggested.

Atherosclerosis is the number one killer in this country.

A comparison of the incidence of atherosclerosis found in the Negroes of Haiti and South Carolina revealed a ratio of two to one in favor of the Americans, Dr. Dale Groom of the Medical College of South Carolina reported at the American Heart Association meeting in San Francisco.

The American Negroes, both male and female at all age levels above 20 years, exhibited an incidence of hardening of the coronary arteries twice as great as Negroes in Haiti. This strongly suggests that environmental factors in the lives of the Americans raise their susceptibility to coronary disease, the scientist said.

Dietary differences do not seem to be the reason, as many researchers now are prone to suspect. Rather, it appears to be the stress of the American way of life.

Haitians habitually exercise more, mainly through hard physical labor. They also walk more than their American counterparts. Yet, most visitors to Haiti consider the inhabitants to be happier and more carefree, less concerned with the future or even the present.

Contrasted with this slow tempo is the more complex life of the Negro in the U. S., with its social tensions and mechanizations. It is more competitive, both socially and economically.

Dr. Groom said a widely prevalent view is that atherosclerosis is somehow linked to a person's diet and especially to the diet's fat content.

Yet, the incidence of hardening in the aorta, the main artery carrying blood from the heart to most parts of the body, was almost identical in both groups, he said.

If diet were influential as a cause of atherosclerosis, one would expect the conditions of the two types of arteries of both groups to be identical. Instead, the condition of one type of artery, the aorta, was the same for both groups while the coronaries of the two groups differed.

What then might be the explanation for the statistically significant difference seen in the levels of coronary disease among the two Negro groups? Since racial differences are more or less ruled out as an explanation, Dr. Groom and his colleagues tried to identify differences other than diet.

Other environmental differences that can be considered in this aorta-coronary discrepancy include climate, altitude, and the vastly greater prevalence of many infectious and parasitic diseases in Haiti. Working with Dr. Groom were Drs. Edward E. McKee,

Charles Webb and Faye W. Grant (now of Evanston, Ill.) of the Medical College, and Dr. Vergniaud Pean of the faculty of medicine, University of Haiti, Port-au-Prince.

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