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MEDICINE

Hypertension High in East

➤ **HYPERTENSION** is probably a bit more frequent in the Orient than it is in this country or in Europe.

This was indicated as a result of a study on the incidence of hypertension in the Orient reported to the Symposium on Hypertension at Hahnemann Medical College and Hospital held in Philadelphia.

Often referred to as "executive's disease," hypertension is simply an increase of blood pressure above the normal. It is believed that 20,000,000 Americans are victims of the disease, in varying degree.

Dr. Henry Schroeder, associate professor of medicine at Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis, Mo., said that hypertension was found to be fairly frequent among Japanese. A high incidence was also found among Chinese in Taiwan, Manila and Hong Kong, as well as among Filipinos, Thai, Indians and Lebanese.

Dr. Schroeder listed the following areas in order of descending frequencies of high blood pressure:

Beirut, Manila, Hong Kong, Bangkok, Taipei, Bombay, Lucknow and Agra.

Strokes, or apoplexy, were found to be the first cause of death in Japan (over twice the incidence of any other country). They were also common among Chinese,

Thai and some Indians, whereas heart failure was more common in Filipinos and Lebanese. Average blood pressure of healthy Orientals was found to be slightly lower than in healthy Americans.

Studies of the Negro population of the Bahama Islands indicated to another speaker, Dr. Marvin Moser, adjunct physician in medicine at Montefiore Hospital in New York, that elevated blood pressure and hypertensive cardiovascular disease is more common among Negroes than in persons of other races.

Until recently, he pointed out, fragmentary evidence had suggested that blood pressure among primitive peoples of the Negro race and in the Orient was decidedly lower than among comparable individuals living in come complex societies. Recent data suggest, however, that hypertension and heart disease resulting from high blood pressure are common occurrences among these peoples regardless of the degree of complexity of their civilization.

Preliminary data, Dr. Moser said, suggest that hereditary factors may be of more importance in explaining the racial difference than dietary or stress factors.

Science News Letter, December 20, 1958

ENGINEERING

Drill Mont Blanc Tunnel

➤ **WORK HAS** begun on a road tunnel through Mont Blanc, the highest mountain in Europe, which will reduce the distance between Paris and Milan, Italy, by about 195 miles.

The concrete-lined tunnel will be 7.4 miles long and will require the excavation of approximately 1,308,000 cubic yards of rock. The road width will be 23 feet, with a height of 29½ feet, a French Embassy spokesman in London told SCIENCE SERVICE.

The interior of the tunnel will have electric lighting throughout, and fine water sprays will reduce the tunnel temperature from approximately 120 degrees Fahrenheit to about 72 degrees Fahrenheit for comfortable driving conditions. Traffic will run in single lanes in each direction.

The Mont Blanc tunnel will be open all year round and will be prepared to handle an expected annual traffic rate of 600,000 vehicles, carrying approximately 1,500,000 passengers.

It will contain 24 service stations—one approximately every 1,000 yards—on both sides of the tunnel, to deal with breakdowns and minor repairs. In addition to the service stations, there will be small recesses every 219 yards, cut out of the rock and large enough to hold a man.

The cost of the whole tunnel from Chamonix to Aosta, together with the approach roads in both countries, has been estimated at approximately \$16,000,000.

The French and Italian sections of the tunnel will be exactly equal in length, 3.7 miles each, and the cost of construction is

being equally shared by the governments. Insofar as the Italian section is concerned, local authorities in Aosta and various Swiss interests are also participating in financing the cost.

When completed in three years' time, the Mont Blanc tunnel will be one of the major highway engineering feats ever carried out in Europe.

Science News Letter, December 20, 1958

DERMATOLOGY

Wind and Heat Influence Cancer Susceptibility

➤ **PERSONS** living in hot, dry, windy areas may be more prone to develop skin cancer.

A University of Texas scientist reported research in Connecticut and Texas confirms the belief that light-skinned sunbathers are more likely to develop skin cancers in high, arid places where strong winds and high temperatures prevail for long periods of time.

In El Paso County the occurrence of skin cancer was eight times that in Connecticut, Prof. Eleanor J. Macdonald told the American Academy of Dermatology and Syphilology meeting in Chicago. Connecticut has only about 59% of the possible annual sunshine in contrast to El Paso which has about 80%.

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