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MEDICINE

Muscular Dystrophy Clue Found in Tissue

NEW CLUES suggest that connective tissue, not muscle fiber, harbors the culprit that causes crippling muscular dystrophy.

Damaging changes occur in muscles when this disease strikes, leaving its victims weak and crippled. Two American researchers have now discovered that the muscle fibers in "a number of cases" have been invaded and are being destroyed by enzymes that are found in connective tissue.

Connective tissue binds together and is the support of the various structures of the body. These enzymes are present in the connective tissue that surrounds the decaying muscle fibers, Geoffrey H. Bourne and M. Nelly Golarz, department of anatomy, Emory University, Atlanta, explain.

It is entirely possible that connective tissue produces an abundance of these enzymes which in turn penetrate muscle fiber to the extent that they destroy the normal supply of nourishment to the muscle, the authors suggest.

Or, there may be a defect in the muscle fibers themselves that causes the formation of these enzymes in connective tissue.

Their third theory suggests that some of the elements in muscle fiber may be "leaking" past without being used by the muscle. The enzymes in connective tissue surrounding these muscles might be preventing the normal replacement of this leakage.

Whichever theory is correct, it now appears that the presence of these enzymes must have some significant role in the cause of muscular dystrophy, the investigators report in *Nature* (June 20).

Science News Letter, July 4, 1959

SOCIOLOGY

Brides and Grooms Are Younger Than Ever

TODAY'S BRIDES and grooms are younger than any others in the nation's history, the Population Reference Bureau reported.

The average age for first marriages in

the U. S. last year was 23 for men and 20 for women. More girls married at 18 than at any other age.

In 1890, men averaged 26 at first marriage and women averaged 22. Since then, the average age has been declining slowly but steadily.

Last year about 45% of women marrying for the first time and slightly more than 13% of first-time grooms were less than 20 years of age, the Bureau reported. Idaho's newly married couples were the youngest, with brides averaging 19 and grooms 22. Connecticut's were the oldest, 22 and 24.6 respectively.

The Bureau offered no reason for the trend toward early marriages.

Factors believed to contribute, however, are the nation's continued economic prosperity, teen-agers "going steady" at progressively younger ages, and a significant percentage of pre-marital pregnancies in young girls. The G.I. Bill of Rights financial aid to college students, making it easier for them to marry while still in school, is another possible factor.

The Bureau also reported about one-fourth of last year's marriages in the U. S. were remarriages. One of every 20 divorced women that remarried was a teen-ager. Divorced men remarried, on the average, at 36 and divorced women at 31.

Last year's marriages, the Bureau said, were the fewest since 1939. This was attributed primarily to the 1958 business recession, although the low birth rates in the 1930's and the high birth rates since 1945 were given as secondary reasons.

Science News Letter, July 4, 1959

Questions

ASTRONOMY—Where can the eclipse of Regulus by Venus be seen? p. 2.

MEDICINE—What relationship has been found between high I.Q. and gout? p. 7.

PUBLIC HEALTH—How would a nuclear war between the U.S. and the Soviet Union affect fallout over the world? p. 5.

Photographs: Cover, Joint Committee on Atomic Energy; p. 3, General Electric Company; p. 5, University of California's Radiation Laboratory; p. 10, National Academy of Sciences; p. 11, University of Washington; p. 16, Eastman Chemical Products Inc.

Do You Know

The long-range *timber* goal of the U. S. Forest Service is an annual harvest of 21.1 billion board feet, about three times the 1957 annual cut.

The only rare earth not found in nature is *promethium*, a fission product of uranium-235, named for the Greek god of fire because it is created only in the furnace of nuclear disintegration.