

MEDICINE

Care for Aged Problem

► THE MOST IMPORTANT problem facing hospitals in this period of rising costs is providing adequate care for the aged, the new president of the American Hospital Association, Dr. Jack Masur, told SCIENCE SERVICE. Dr. Masur, who took office Sept. 27 at the American Hospital Association meeting, Atlantic City, N. J., is the first Federal Government official to head this national organization. He is director of the world's largest research hospital, the Clinical Center of the National Institutes of Health, Bethesda, Md., and also an assistant surgeon general of the U. S. Public Health Service.

Dr. Masur was interviewed on the important problem of medical care, with special relation to Federal measures in effect and proposed, especially for the 17,000,000 over 65.

Q. Does the Kerr-Mills Act which depends on the state-Federal matching of funds offer adequate care for older people?

A. Admittedly, the Act alone is not sufficient to meet the needs of the aging. However, in combination with the Blue Cross voluntary health insurance and commercial carriers it is thought by the majority of American Hospital Association members to have potential adequacy.

Q. Do you mean that the Act as it stands could be improved?

A. Its accomplishments to date are being carefully studied by the American Hospital Association staff. The content of each of the state provisions among the present 40 cooperating states is being analyzed to determine how a more adequate bill might be set up.

MEDICINE

Latest Medical News

► PARENTS who expect antibiotics to be given their children for every case of sore throat should leave the decision to the pediatrician without undue fear of rheumatic fever.

Of 2,545 Chicago school children admitted to a pediatric outpatient clinic, only two, untreated with penicillin, developed rheumatic fever, Drs. Alan C. Siegel, Eloise E. Johnson and Gene H. Stollerman, all of Northwestern University Medical School, report in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, 265: 559, 1961.

The physicians state that although some type of streptococcal infection is carried in the throats of even healthy school children, its relative mildness offers small risk of the childhood disease that so often damages the heart. Dr. Stollerman also reports the findings in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 177:823, 1961. The Chicago doctors advise further studies of civilian streptococcal pharyngitis (sore throat) outbreaks to help guide pediatricians in treatment.

Automobile accidents are sometimes due

Q. One of the common problems today is long-term hospitalization for chronic diseases such as cancer. How can the average person anticipate such expense?

A. All income groups are potentially indigent if they lack sufficient hospital insurance. The Blue Cross cannot meet the total cost, of course, because of the need for some type of voluntary health insurance to cover more comprehensively the cost of physicians' services, drugs, appliances, etc.

Q. As a Government employee, are you expected to advocate the Kennedy Administration medical care program when American Hospital Association opposes it?

A. No, but I accept the responsibility of assuring sufficient hospital care to all ages. This cannot be guaranteed overnight, and it does not mean that the hospitals should be expected to give custodial care that is nonmedical.

Q. What about nursing homes?

A. We have almost half a million people in nursing home beds. There is an urgent need for improvement of standards of care in a great many nursing homes. We particularly need a national inspection and approval program similar to that conducted by the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Hospitals.

Q. Is there still a shortage of nurses in nursing homes and hospitals?

A. Yes. The American Hospital Association is working with the National League for Nursing and the American Nurses Association to try to bring more properly trained men as well as women into the profession.

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son is in good physical health and subject to emotional reaction caused by giddiness and apprehension until level flight is attained.

Eye color of children is unpredictable, Dr. F. Clarke Fraser of McGill University, Montreal, Quebec, Canada, tells a questioner in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* 177:884, 1961.

Although two blue-eyed parents usually have blue-eyed children, this is not always true. It is an over-simplification when textbooks state that blue eyes turn brown. However, a number of children with hazel or brown eyes were born with blue eyes that darkened in the first months of their lives.

Increased cost of medicine is predicted by the Pharmaceutical Manufacturers' Association as a result of the decision of the U. S. Food and Drug Administration requiring prescription drug manufacturers to place inserts in most of their packages describing side effects of the drugs. By next March 5, the ruling must go into effect. The drug-gists say it will add millions to the cost of the drugs and will not promote the desired safety that FDA expects.

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ANTHROPOLOGY

African Diet Studied

► THE HEREROS of Africa should be prime candidates for heart attacks if diet alone means anything, for they eat practically nothing but meat, fat and milk products.

On such fare, according to much Western medical research, the veins of the Hereros should be lined with cholesterol leading to heart disease and death at an early age for a large percentage of the population.

Nevertheless, the Hereros do not appear to have an abnormally large number of deaths from heart disease, Dr. Gordon D. Gibson, anthropologist of the Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D. C., found on a nine months' stay in South West Africa and Bechuanaland where the Hereros live.

Dr. Gibson told SCIENCE SERVICE hospital records in the area do not show that many Hereros died of heart disease. The most common serious diseases in the area are pneumonia, tuberculosis, malaria and venereal diseases.

Dr. Gibson, his wife and assistant Bethune M. Gibson, also an anthropologist, and their two children spent nine months in Herero country studying the tribe's diet and social system. They brought back with them many samples of Herero life, clothing, ornaments and utensils that will be exhibited in a new hall on Africa at the Smithsonian.

Dr. Gibson also collected samples of and information about the various foods eaten by the Hereros in an attempt to find out why and how the Hereros escape the scourge of heart disease known in the West.

He and Mrs. Gibson found that some of civilization's products had reached even the remotest areas. They found that men, women and children smoke in even the most remote Herero tribe they visited. Coffee, tea, and especially sugar, were desired by these Africans who did not show as much interest in salt—an old stand-by carried by missionaries in the past, together with colored beads.

The Gibsons visited three Herero areas of different degrees of westernization. In one, the police zone of South West Africa (under South African rule), the people had had considerable contact with whites. Many of the huts are built on the Western square plan in contrast to the local-style round huts. In addition, enameled, store-bought cooking vessels are used instead of the old wooden ones.

Another group in Bechuanaland has had a contact with whites in the past and is in an earlier stage of acculturation. However, they do wear the European clothing introduced by the whites around 1850 as do the more civilized groups.

A third group visited by Dr. Gibson lives in the northwest corner of South West

Africa just south of the Angola border. This group was the least westernized, wearing leather clothing and heavy ornaments of iron beads made from European scrap iron worked by wandering smiths from other areas.

Dr. Gibson found that all three groups of Hereros rely for their main source of food on their cattle, sheep and goats. One Herero told Dr. Gibson that meat is food, but corn is just something to fill the stomach. The Hereros sometimes do have to eat corn and pumpkins, which they grow, and wild-growing greens, roots and berries when their milk and meat supply does not hold out. Sometimes the herds are reduced when grazing is bad because of poor rainfall. Cattle diseases also diminish the herds.

When food is needed "to fill the stomach" Hereros cook a green, *Amaranthus thunbergi*, called omboa by the natives. A berry, various species of the genus *Grewia*, that tastes like the currant but has larger seeds is also collected.

However, the Hereros prefer meat and thickened milk that is shaken in large calabashes with leaves and roots for 15 to 20 minutes until it thickens. They also like a clear butter that is boiled until all the water disappears. This butter is eaten "straight" by the spoonful but is also used on greens. The butter is stored for long periods in large cowhide vessels with a seal of mud and cow dung that keeps it from getting rancid too quickly.

Several months of detailed study will be necessary before any conclusions can be reached about the relationship between the Herero diet and incidence of heart disease. Dr. Gibson said the reason Hereros do not have as much heart disease could possibly be due to a racial factor, to exercise, or to the early mortality due to other diseases.

The study was carried out by the Smithsonian Institution with supporting grants from the National Science Foundation and the National Institutes of Health.

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VITAL STATISTICS

Pay Earners Live Longer Now Than 75 Years Ago

► THE AVERAGE American wage earner can expect to live twice as long as his forefathers did about 75 years ago and a little longer than the average person in the United States today.

Statisticians of the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company, New York, report that the average life span of its millions of industrial policyholders reached a new high of 70.5 years in 1960, more than twice the longevity during 1879-94, the earliest period for which data are available. The largest gains are in the younger ages where mortality has been traditionally high, increasing 5.9 years for the five-year-old during the last two decades.

The gain for those 65 years of age for the same period was 2.3 years. The life expectancy of the group as a whole, which was six years less than that of the average population about 50 years ago, is now slightly greater.

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AFRICAN HEREROS—A Herero woman, left, is seen wearing the European style clothing brought to Africa around 1850. The beaddress is an adaptation from the European style. Above, two Herero women from South West Africa are mending a woman's cape later brought back to the U. S. for exhibit at the Smithsonian Institution.