

MEDICINE

Krebiozen Case Closed

It has been definitely established by National Cancer Institute investigations that the so-called drug, Krebiozen, possesses no anticancer activity in man.

► THE NATIONAL CANCER INSTITUTE has washed its hands of Krebiozen.

At a news conference in Washington, D. C., Dr. Kenneth M. Endicott, NCI director, said the committee appointed by him last August to review 504 case records "clearly establishes that Krebiozen does not possess any anticancer activity in man." From a scientific standpoint he said "we regard the case closed."

The committee was unanimous in its conclusion that no clinical trial of Krebiozen should be undertaken because the drug does not qualify as a potentially experimental drug on any one of three grounds.

First, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration has demonstrated that Krebiozen is not a tissue hormone, as claimed by the proponents of the drug, but is creatine, a normal component of the human body concerned primarily with muscle contraction.

Second, Krebiozen does not possess "consistently strong anticancer activity in experimental animals," a basis upon which most clinical trials are based.

Third, Krebiozen does not reveal the "accidental discovery that it has anticancer activity in human beings."

The Government report showed that of the 504 cases studied, only 288 fulfilled the necessary conditions for evaluating the effects of Krebiozen. Of the 288, no significant regression of cancer was found in 273. Only two of the remaining 15 met the criteria for "objective regression" and in one of the two, the committee could not say what the tumor was.

But Dr. Andrew C. Ivy, scientific adviser of the Krebiozen Foundation, held a press conference immediately following the official one, both at the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, and announced, "I'm not giving up. Krebiozen is here to stay." Dr. Stevan Durovic, who first extracted Krebiozen from the serum of horses in 1948, also was present at the second news conference and agreed with Dr. Ivy.

Four Government officials were present at the officially called conference: Dr. Endicott, Boisfeuillet Jones, special assistant to the Secretary for Health and Medical Affairs, HEW; Winton B. Rankin, assistant commissioner, FDA; and Dr. T. Phillip Waalkes, associate director, NCI.

• Science News Letter, 84:258 Oct. 26, 1963

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Medicine Headache Cause

► OVERUSE of a headache drug can cause headache.

It can also cause serious kidney disease.

These alarming results of overusing the common mixture of aspirin, caffeine and acetophenetidin, marketed without prescription for many years, were reported in the New England Journal of Medicine, 269:722, 1963.

Dr. Malcolm M. Fifield of Duluth, Minn., warned that strongest measures should be taken to prevent indiscriminate use by the public of acetophenetidin compounds.

Dr. Howard Weinstein of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration told SCIENCE SERVICE that these compounds were among the "older drugs" coming under current medical review but that no definite conclusions had been reached.

European centers have previously reported danger of prolonged use of acetophenetidin compounds, mainly used for headache and fever. Dr. Fifield has now added four cases, which he believes support the earlier studies.

Two men and two women, one of them a nurse who had been taking these remedies during a period of 20 years for migraine headache, all had peptic ulcer, kidney disease and continued headache that apparently was perpetuating itself by habituation, or

a type of addiction to the compounds. The red blood cells have been affected most commonly, but headache, tremor, irritability, muscular twitching, confusion and insomnia have also resulted.

"More recently," Dr. Fifield said, "an often fatal nephrotoxicity" has been reported, primarily by scientists in Germany and the Scandinavian countries.

Symptoms are few, but reduced kidney function is one of the first evidences of disease. The complexion may be muddy or the color of coffee with milk as a result of hemoglobin changes.

Nearly all patients first come to the physician when kidney colic and other symptoms of kidney obstruction appear.

• Science News Letter, 84:258 Oct. 26, 1963

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Single Dose of Drug Advised Every Other Day

► TO INCREASE the safety of cortisone-like drugs, whose prolonged use may be dangerous, three Harvard University physicians advise taking them every other day in a single dose.

An asthma patient, for example, was

given 80 milligrams of prednisone, the generic name for Meticorten, every 48 hours instead of 10 milligrams four times a day. Tests showed almost equal results in the two methods.

Among 58 patients studied, the researchers treated 33 cases of asthma, five of emphysema, three of contact dermatitis, three of rheumatoid arthritis, two of a neurosis affecting the blood vessels, along with other ailments.

The alternate treatment on every other day was especially helpful to patients who showed symptoms of obesity and high blood pressure associated with Cushing's disease.

The hormone drugs, or steroids, used in this study were cortisone, prednisone, triamcinolone, and dexamethasone, Drs. John G. Harter, William J. Reddy and George W. Thorn of Harvard Medical School reported in the New England Journal of Medicine, 269:591, 1963.

• Science News Letter, 84:258 Oct. 26, 1963

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Pregnancy Complication Traced to Enzyme Lack

► ONE OF THE MAIN causes for deaths from toxemia, a form of poisoning that afflicts eight percent of all pregnant women, has been found.

The lack of a single enzyme can kill both the woman and the unborn child.

Specialists have been able to control poisoning of pregnancy, called pre-eclampsia, by diet and careful prenatal supervision. However, the actual cause was unknown until the enzyme discovery, reported to the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists meeting in Phoenix, Ariz., by Dr. F. John de Maria of the University of British Columbia.

The enzyme monoamine oxidase, which helps control blood pressure, was lower among a group of mothers with pre-eclampsia, which means poisoning without convulsions, than among normal first-baby mothers of the same age.

• Science News Letter, 84:258 Oct. 26, 1963

All Babies Premature

► HUMAN PREGNANCY might last as long as an elephant's—22 months—if it were not for evolution.

However, because of the increasing size of the brain and upright posture in humans, the pelvic bone is barely able to accommodate the head of a nine-month-old fetus, Dr. Ernest W. Page of the University of California School of Medicine said in Phoenix, Ariz.

"All human babies are born prematurely by mammalian standards," Dr. Page said. "The human fetus does not achieve the degree of maturity comparable to other mammals until a year or so after birth."

The effect of "evolutionary anatomic" arrangements probably has been to complicate human birth in other ways, Dr. Page told a regional meeting of the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists. Among the complications he mentioned was abortion, popularly called miscarriage.

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