

MEDICINE

Prefer Western Medicine

The influence of modern Western medicine has spread and up-to-date medication is preferred in Vietnam to treatment by ancient folk doctors—By Faye Marley

► THE WESTERN WORLD is winning in South Vietnam, medically at least. Four out of five in Saigon choose doctors prescribing antibiotics and other U.S.A. medicines rather than folk doctors dispensing ancient Chinese herb preparations.

U.S. Public Health Service experts discovered the Western-oriented revolution in medical practice as the result of a house-to-house survey in the nation which is fighting Chinese-inspired Communist penetration.

The family interviews showed that 79% of the South Vietnamese living in Saigon choose Western medicine over the oriental type, both of which are available.

Health and medical care in the rural areas—about 90% of South Vietnam is rural—also is becoming Western, an article in Public Health Reports, 79:383, 1964, said.

In spite of the guerrilla warfare in this beleaguered country, the rural health program of the central department of health has more than 5,400 modern first aid stations, double the number in January 1962.

A "strategic hamlet program" begun in the middle of 1962 has given reasonable security to the native health workers through fortification, defense and a control of the population, two U.S. Public Health Service representatives reported.

Local health workers are trained by government physicians and put in charge of health stations in village administration buildings or, if the station is small, it may be located in any sheltered place such as a corner of a schoolhouse or in a private home.

Mosquito spraying against malaria and other modern sanitation methods are popularized with the help of village health councils. The work is supervised by male district health nurses. Midwives and female nurses also help.

Although Vietnam's hospital conditions rank with the average in Southeast Asia, there are only about 200 physicians in the entire national health service. There should be 400 doctors for the existing number of hospital beds, allowing a standard of one doctor to 50 beds.

To help the situation, medical students are contributing a two-year compulsory internship in army or provincial hospitals after four years of medical schooling. About 90 such interns are working in army hospitals.

Qualified Vietnamese physicians are receiving advanced academic training in the United States to prepare them to teach at the University of Saigon. In the meantime, an interim faculty there of U.S. professors, capable of teaching medicine in the French language, is supplementing the native faculty.

By 1968, this program should provide

Vietnam with 1,000 to 1,300 more doctors, which will mean a ratio of one doctor to 11,000 to 15,000 persons, a modest, but no longer critical percentage, the public health writers said.

In addition to the 200 doctors in the national health service, there are now approximately 600 physicians licensed for civilian practice. About 500 of these are Vietnamese, but more than ten percent of them are over 65 years of age, and over 20%, more than 60. The remaining 100 doctors are mainly French citizens holding temporary licenses, physicians with relief or charitable organizations and students absent for educational leave.

Dr. Willard H. Boynton, former chief of the Public Health Division's U.S. Operations Mission, Vietnam, now with the U.S. Agency for International Development, Karachi, Pakistan, assisted in this report. James T. Baird Jr., health statistics advisor to the Vietnam Department of Health, collaborated in the study.

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SURGERY

Cerebral Palsy Research

► HOPE FOR cerebral palsy victims has risen because of nerve grafts and other discoveries made in the past year.

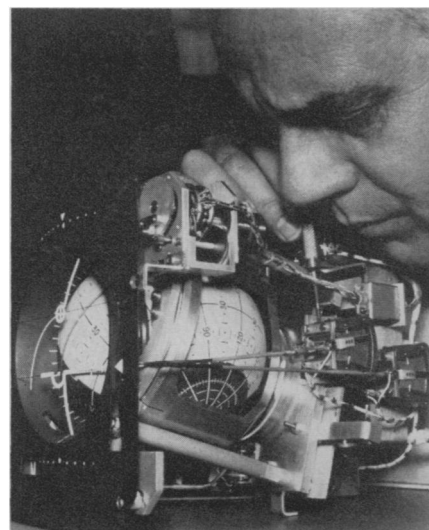
The first successful grafting of nerves and new prospects for nerve banks to help surgeons repair damaged arms and legs opens the way for more advances. Biological principles of nerve tissue regeneration are being developed and the possibility of regrowing damaged brain and spinal cord tissue looms on the scientific horizon.

Dr. Brewster S. Miller, medical director of United Cerebral Palsy Research and Educational Foundation, in the annual report of 1963 just published, reviewed recent advances in the fight against the crippling disease.

The nerve graft work was done under UCPA grants to Dr. James B. Campbell, New York University Medical Center, and Dr. C. Andrew L. Bassett of Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons. They used nerve grafts from deceased donors to regenerate severed human nerves in persons whose legs, arms or hands had been cut or crushed.

The body's rejection of the transplants was overcome by freezing the nerves, exposing them to high radiation and using a thin, porous covering to protect the graft.

Although the method has not yet been successful with the central nervous system or in destroyed nerves. Dr. Miller indicated that nerve banks can now be established.



Honeywell

APOLLO GYROSCOPE—The information astronauts can get from this little device will permit them to change manually the position of the Apollo capsule in space. Along the outer rim of the display (top, right and bottom left) are roll, pitch and yaw rate indicators, while the three white pointers on display screen at left (top, right and bottom) show how much the craft deviates from the correct position.

Another promising piece of research during the past year was done by Dr. Geoffrey S. Dawes of the University of Oxford, England. Working under a UCPA grant at a U.S. Public Health Service laboratory in San Juan, Puerto Rico, he discovered that injection of an alkaline substance and a carbohydrate into monkeys deliberately deprived of oxygen quickened their recovery.

The injection released energy from metabolism without breathing in oxygen. This research points toward prevention of neurologic disabilities common in "high risk" babies deprived of oxygen for varying periods of time. Lack of oxygen is a common cause of brain damage.

Electronic screening techniques by which the unborn baby's heart beat is checked to signal the presence of possible trouble are being investigated by Dr. Joseph Seitchik of Baltimore's Sinai Hospital.

Dr. Miller said isolation of the German measles virus is a giant step forward, as scientists have now started work on a vaccine. German measles is one cause of cerebral palsy if the infection occurs during the first few weeks of a woman's pregnancy.

Grants of \$677,441 for 171 different research and training programs have been made in the past year by the UCPA. The programs include work at leading medical and educational institutions in the United States, Canada and England.

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