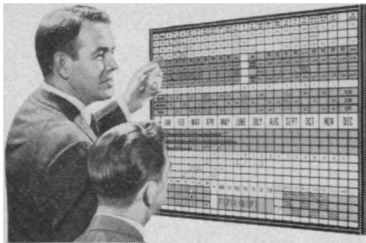


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MEDICINE

Study Soviet Virus Claim

► **SOVIET CLAIMS** that a virus causes amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), commonly known in the United States as Lou Gehrig's disease because it killed the famous American baseball player, are getting further study by U.S. scientists. Six of them have just returned to Bethesda, Md., to report on a 12,000-mile trip to visit 23 clinical and laboratory research centers in the Soviet Union.

Neither the Russian nor the American scientists are completely satisfied that a virus really does cause ALS, multiple sclerosis, Parkinson's disease and other chronic neurological ailments. But they find the idea worth pursuing.

Dr. L. A. Zilber of Moscow, who reported the virus discovery, speaks of it only as a "possible" virus.

The Americans told of the fine cooperation given them by Soviet scientists and said they were planning to exchange laboratory materials to continue the study.

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One of the virus theories the scientists are pursuing is that of "long latency." The possibility exists that a person may be exposed to a virus that may not appear until years later. This could mean that an experimentally inoculated animal would have to be observed for years.

In the Russian experiments a few monkeys were made weak and ill by injections of ALS material from a human brain, but they were not paired with controls or usually followed up.

Dr. Hilary Koprowski, director of the Wistar Institute of Anatomy and Biology, Philadelphia, who headed the scientific mission to Russia, received permission for his virologists to study strains of rabies virus reported by Soviet scientists to be associated with multiple sclerosis.

This virus strain is related to the so-called multiple sclerosis vaccine widely used in Russia which turned out to be based on a strain of rabies virus.

Dr. Jacob A. Brody of the Arctic Health Research Center, Anchorage, Alaska, who served as secretary to the group, plans to return to Siberia in the spring on a search for rare diseases, including a tick-borne encephalitis, which is followed by a type of paralysis that the Soviets believe is evidence of a chronic virus infection.

• Science News Letter, 87:30 January 9, 1965

MEDICINE

Lung Cancer Deaths Higher in England

► **AMERICAN MEN** are twice as likely to die of heart attacks as those in England and Wales, but the British have twice as many lung cancer deaths.

An estimated five times as many middle-aged British males also risk death from such diseases as chronic bronchitis, emphysema and bronchiectasis.

Reasons for differences in bronchial diseases were sought in two surveys reported in the British Medical Journal 2:1487, 1964, but the causes are still uncertain, the researchers conclude.

In Berlin, N.H., a manufacturing center of pulp and paper products with about 18,000 population, a sampling of men and women was questioned. In urban and country areas of Britain, men and women taken from the practice lists of 92 doctors were surveyed. In both countries, a simple lung-function test called the Wright peak flow meter was used.

The effects of cigarette smoking, which was greater in Britain, and of British urban living, where air pollution was higher, were seen as increasing bronchitis.

Dr. B. G. Ferris of the Harvard School of Public Health and Dr. D. O. Anderson of the University of British Columbia, Vancouver, reported the Berlin, N.H. study, and Drs. D. D. Reid and C. M. Fletcher, both of London, collaborated in the British study.

• Science News Letter, 87:30 January 9, 1965