HEW

Microsurgery being performed to clean out a fat-clogged blood vessel

ATHEROSCLEROSIS

Joint Assault Launched On Arterial Ailments

An all-out attack on hardening of the arteries was declared in New York last week by a group of scientists who were called together for what may be the first multi-disciplined meeting ever held on the subject. Out of it participants hoped to learn—from each other—what they could of early signs of the number-one medical problem of the affluent west.

Among the learned professors from this country and overseas attending the lectures were a few young medical students who had just begun to use their microscopes, and such old hands as Dr. Henry Haimovici, Dr. Michael DeBakey of Baylor University, Houston, and Dr. Theodore Gillman of Cambridge, England, who helped organize the meeting.

"Never before, to my knowledge, has there been a conference that did not confine itself to one fragmentary part of the subject," said Dr. Haimovici, New York surgeon and professor at Albert Einstein College of Medicine.

The recently enacted Heart, Cancer and Stroke program, which was planned under the chairmanship of Dr. DeBakey, has popularized terms such as coronary thrombosis and cerebral accident. But few people know that strokes can be prevented if the tendency is discovered early enough. Few of us know that they have an abdominal aorta that may get clogged with atherosclerotic fats and endanger their extremities.

"We called this conference because we are trying to learn more about the cause and prevention of atherosclerosis, principal component of the broader arteriosclerosis—or hardening of the arteries," Dr. Haemovici explained in an interview. "The late stages such as are encountered in nursing homes and mortuaries are most common, but the early stages, which may begin in the 20's, are neglected.

"Everyone in this room has hardening of the arteries," he said.

One advance in the findings reported at the session was that the arterial wall, far from being passive, is an active participant in the process of artery hardening. Diet cannot be proved to be the culprit, but animals fed on a high cholesterol diet do get clogged arteries.

Even pigs get strokes. One speaker said there might be a relationship between such porcine cerebral accidents and a diet of human table scraps thrown to the aged swine.

One light aspect of the conference came from Dr. Gillman, who quoted a British verse writer, A. P. Herbert, who wrote "How to Live Longer," in rhyme. The poet said the motor car is to blame for hardened arteries because people ride too much.

"The more we telephone the more we sit," the poet said. He suggested that the golfer dismiss his caddy and carry his own clubs, that he take a long boat ride so he could walk the deck instead of flying all over the world in a hurry.

"Animal fat fells you flat," and "pray for a transport strike so you can live as long as you like" are other paraphrases of his rhymes.

EPIDEMIOLOGY

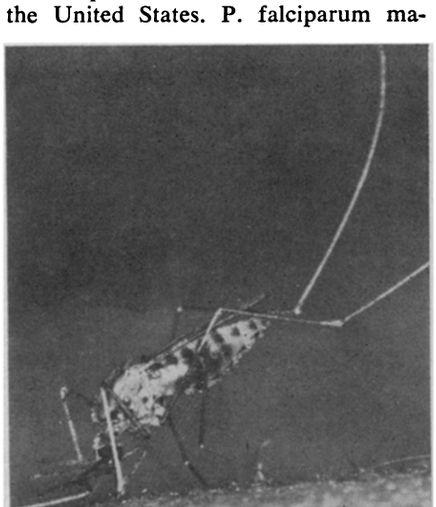
No Threat From Malaria

Chances are slim that malaria will become a health problem in the United States, in spite of the recent influx of military personnel infected with malaria returning from Southeast Asia.

Dr. David Sencer, chief of the Communicable Diseases Center in Atlanta told a meeting of the World Health Organization that evidence over the last 15 years indicates a "relatively low malaria potential" in this country.

However, in view of the fact that increasing numbers of travelers, missionaries, Peace Corps workers and others are coming home from places where malaria is prevalent, malariologists are on the lookout for possible cases. More reliable techniques for their detection are needed, he reported.

Col. William D. Tigertt, director of the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research, Washington, D.C., told Science Service that the minimal number of carrier mosquitoes in the urban places where many of the returnees go may account for the low incidence of malaria. In the last year, he said, he has not heard of a single case of P. falciparum malaria transmitted in the United States. P. falciparum malaria is the strain dominant in Vietnam's jungles and is resistant to traditional chloroquine therapy.



One report from Walter Reed shows success in treating this resistant-strain with sulfones given with chloroquine and quinine. Another study indicated that Daraprim (pyrimethamine) and a long-acting sulfonamid called Fanasil are also an effective combination in treating malaria.