

Medical Science Notes

RADIOLOGY

Double Aberrations From Alcohol

Alcohol can produce more than one kind of aberration. The man who sees pink elephants may also be exposing himself to the same hazards faced by those exposed to the atomic bomb.

And if he really wants to live dangerously, Irish coffee is just the thing, for coffee and alcohol are synergists; that is, mixed together, they are several times more potent than when used alone.

Michigan scientists, studying the radiomimetic effects of beverages, drugs and insecticides, were surprised to find that alcohol can cause the same biological changes as radiation when tested on onion root tips, a simple testing technique in use since 1951. "A concentration of only 0.25 percent, the alcohol level in the blood of an intoxicated person, was as potent as exposing the root tips to 10 r/day of chronic gamma radiation. If alcohol is equally radiomimetic for human chromosomes, the consumption of one ounce of alcohol per day would be equivalent to 1 r/week of ionizing radiation, 100 times the Atomic Energy Commission's maximum permissible dose for the general public," Drs. Karl and Hally Sax of the Cranbrook Institute of Science said.

FERTILITY

Multiple Births Avoided

A new fertility drug that enables previously barren women to have children reportedly does not present complications of multiple births that often attend fertility therapy.

Doctors at New York's Mount Sinai Hospital said tests with the drug, Clomid, have been encouraging. The Food and Drug Administration has issued an "approval letter" signifying a green light on all but minor considerations. The manufacturer, Wm. S. Merrell, Company, would not say when the drug might be marketed.

VETERINARY MEDICINE

Review Veterinary Drugs

Animals are going to be assured of the same safety and efficacy of drugs as man when the National Academy of Sciences evaluates the effectiveness of approximately 1100 veterinary drugs introduced between 1938 and 1962.

Prior to the Kefauver-Harris drug amendment of 1962, drugs had only to be safe. Now their ability to do what manufacturers say they will do must also be proved, and nothing in the amendment limits this requirement to drugs intended for human use.

At the request of Food and Drug Administration Commissioner James L. Goddard, the Academy agreed to make the tests, first classifying drugs in broad categories from clearly effective to clearly ineffective and then seeking additional data on those falling in between.

MEDICINE

Chemical Triggers Arthritis

Milk, meat, grains and some vegetables contain a common chemical that may play a role in the onset of rheumatoid arthritis. The chemical is histidine, an amino acid component of protein.

If a person has an abnormally low concentration of histidine in his system, a chemical chain reaction leading to rheumatoid arthritis may take place, Dr. Donald A. Gerber of New York's Downstate Medical Center, Brooklyn, reported.

He studied the blood and urine of more than 100 patients and found that histidine binds copper and blocks any protein alteration.

In spite of the findings, Dr. Gerber emphasized that as yet it is not known whether arthritis patients can be fed histidine with any beneficial effect and there is no sound reason for concentrating on foods high in the chemical.

RADIOTHERAPY

Sugar Pills Almost As Good

Terminal lung cancer patients given only placebo sugar pills live almost as long as those receiving radiation therapy, a New York radiologist reported.

The disappointing results came from a year-long study Dr. Bernard Roswit made on more than 500 patients at 17 Veterans Administration Hospitals.

"At present, it appears the patient is at the mercy of his neoplasm (cancer), and his survival depends more upon the stage of the disease, type of cell, and biological character of the cancer than upon the therapeutic act," Dr. Roswit said.

OBSTETRICS

Induced Labor Safe, Desirable

Induced labor can be a safe and sometimes desirable procedure, better for both mother and child, a Seattle doctor reported.

Though an obstetrician's golf game or a woman's social life should never be the reason for speeding the birth of a child, there are times and situations when it is advantageous, Dr. Robert Rutherford told the American Medical Association at its annual clinical convention.

Women with a history of rapid labors may be candidates for induction, he said. Prematurity may also be an indication when the doctor finds all signs that the baby has reached term and is ready to be delivered. If it is induced, the doctor is sure hospital facilities will be ready to assist mother at every moment during delivery and give the child immediate nursery care.