

Progress in Medical Research

by Faye Marley

The year has produced no breakthrough of miraculous proportion in the cure of fatal diseases such as cancer, but progress is definitely reported in



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lengthening the life of victims of incurable maladies.

What is perhaps even more important is the report of preventives and the development of vaccines, along with the success of heart pumps and other devices that aid in human rehabilitation. The rejection phenomenon that has hampered organ transplants has been combatted experimentally by Anti-Lymphocyte Serum, or ALS. ALS has not only reduced the proportion of white blood cells involved in the rejection process, it prevented a form of arthritis as well. Among the new drugs reported was cycloguanil pamoate, which was effective in the treatment of malaria in Gambia, West Africa, through a single injection.

Localized Hodgkin's disease, which is a malignancy of the lymph nodes and glands, responded to intensive X-ray doses and can be regarded as cured in nearly half of a group of patients studied for 15 years and longer.

Birth control continued to be in the forefront of research, with a new pill reported that can be taken the "morning-after" or any time during six days after sexual intercourse. Human genetics research reported revealed a helpful technique in which cells of babies still in the mother's uterus could be tested for chromosomal defects. Women fearing repeated abnormalities such as mongolism can be reassured if the amniotic fluid proves to contain normal cells.

Sickle cell anemia was reported in a mild form, and research continued on prevention of this disease which affects about nine percent of the Negroes in the United States.

X-ray examination of the breast called mammography is now revealing cancer undetectable by ordinary means. Catheterization of the heart chambers was improved through a long, fine catheter especially designed for passage through a blood vessel.

Here is a review of the past year's events:

A Mexican woman was the first per-

son to survive a heart pump operation for an extended period.

Two promising new vaccines—against German measles, or rubella, and against mumps—were reported receiving successful tests on humans.

The first total synthesis of a prostaglandin, one of a group of substances that may be involved in high blood pressure and other body processes, was reported.

Cancer of the liver was attributed to viruses for the first time, following animal experiments.

A valuable new drug for treating gout was cleared by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration.

A single injection of an experimental drug, called cycloguanil pamoate, developed in the United States, was effective in the treatment of malaria in Gambia, West Africa.

Examination of the breasts by X-ray, called mammography, can reveal cancer undetectable by ordinary means.

A new drug called cephaloridine, which is injected intramuscularly, can be used for gonorrhea sufferers allergic to penicillin.

A new variety of sickle cell anemia with mild symptoms was discovered.

Emphysema in mice was reported caused by a highly poisonous fungal growth that occurs in all tobaccos.

Localized Hodgkin's disease treated with intensive doses of X-ray has been controlled and may be regarded as cured in nearly half of a group of patients studied for 15 years and longer.

More than 130 children and adults have been listed as long-term (five years or more) survivors of leukemia in a worldwide survey.

Virus-like particles in the tissues of acute myelogenous leukemia patients indicate that they reflect the clinical stage of the disease, being present when the disease is active, and absent when a remission has occurred.

Birth control pills were pronounced "not unsafe" by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. An FDA advisory committee recommended further study.

A possible explanation of the chemistry of cancer was seen in a report of hydrogen bond alteration as a major result of a gene mutation. The change was found related to electrical forces within the deoxyribonucleic acid molecule.

A requirement for physicians to obtain the written consent of patients for

the use of investigational drugs was spelled out in guidelines published by the government.

Administration of the volunteer program whereby American physicians give aid to civilians in Vietnam for periods of two months at a time was undertaken by the American Medical Association with the financial backing of the U.S. Agency for International Development. A second agreement giving the AMA responsibility for developing a program to strengthen medical education for the South Vietnamese was signed with AID.

A gelatin-type suture was used to close wounds in animal surgery.

Serious eye damage was reported in workers producing a widely used photographic developer called hydroquinone.

Brewers were ordered not to use traces of cobalt in beer after deaths among beer drinkers.

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