

Medical Sciences Notes

BRAIN DRAIN

British Doctors Rush for U.S. Exam

More than 800 doctors in Great Britain have taken an examination in order to work in the U.S.

This is a record figure for the exam, which was held in London and Edinburgh on Feb. 15.

Last September 730 applied, and 593 actually took the test.

Now the rush is worrying U.S. officials. They fear they will be accused of actively recruiting doctors in Britain.

A statement by the U.S. Educational Council for Foreign Medical Graduates, which organizes the exam, stresses: "Far from being an open invitation for graduates of foreign medical schools to come to the United States, the examination program puts a brake on the immigration of physicians."

But many British doctors regard the exam as "insurance" against the day when they may finally decide to quit, if any promised new deal at home is not good enough.

CHEMOTHERAPY

Drugs Work Against Skin Cancer

Skin cancers too widespread to be treated effectively with X-rays or surgery can be cured with drugs, a Buffalo, N.Y., dermatologist reports.

Few side effects were observed in 300 cancer patients with a total of 10,000 skin lesions treated with 5-fluorouracil by Dr. Edmund Klein of the Roswell Park Memorial Institute. Nearly half have been free of cancer for four years. Anticancer drugs applied in ointments or lotions acted successfully against 95 to 98 percent of two kinds of superficial skin cancers—basal-cell, arising from an underlayer of skin, and squamous, from the top layer. Half a dozen drug compounds have been found useful.

The drugs work by making the cancer cells allergic to certain compounds that can be used to destroy cancerous tissue without harming normal tissue. It's a case of medicine using allergy, a disease process, to its own advantage.

IMMUNOLOGY

Incompatibility Barrier Distrusted

Biological incompatibility, believed by most American scientists to be the main barrier to successful and permanent organ transplants, cannot be proved, Dr. Vladimir P. Demikhov, famous Russian biologist, says in the Moscow Literary Gazette.

Dr. Demikhov, head of the Organ Transplantation Laboratory of the Sklifasofsky First-Aid Clinic, Moscow, emphasizes the need for improved surgery and minimizes the importance of biological incompatibility.

Dr. Demikhov has transplanted dogs' heads and hearts and says that "in general, in no transplantation of whole organs" has he observed either the rejection or the dissolution of tissue. Death of the animals has been due to blood clots or obstruction of blood through the vein because of sutures.

VIETNAM

War-Injured Better Off at Home

War-injured Vietnamese children are better off treated at home than in the U.S., Dr. Howard A. Rusk, New York rehabilitation authority, believes.

Referring to the Committee of Responsibility to Save War-burned and War-injured Vietnamese Children, which is trying to raise \$3 million to bring children to this country, Dr. Rusk points out that moving the children could injure them emotionally as much as they have been injured physically.

Writing editorially in *Medical World News*, Dr. Rusk says that the interests of these children will be best furthered if the U.S. Government and citizens work to develop hospitals and medical resources that could care for them in their own country.

CIGARETTE CONSUMPTION

Decline in British Smoking

Recent reports from England indicate a decline in cigarette smoking, according to the American Cancer Society. Two billion, four hundred million fewer cigarettes were sold in 1965 than in 1964. Also, the number of smokers (16 years and over) dropped by almost half a million between 1961 and 1965, a period in which the population rose by more than one and a quarter million.

By contrast, figures on consumption of cigarettes in the United States have risen each year since the Smoking and Health Report to the Surgeon General implicated them in the cause of lung cancer. In all, 497.4 billion were sold in 1964; 511.5 billion in 1965, and 522.5 billion in 1966.

FERTILITY CONTROL

FDA OK's New Fertility Drug

Clomid, a new drug that stimulates ovulation in sterile women, has been approved by the Food and Drug Administration for prescription marketing.

The drug works through the pituitary gland to synchronize the production of sex hormones that in turn trigger ovulation, the release of a ripe egg from the ovaries. Failure to ovulate is only one cause of barrenness, however, and the newly approved drug is not known to be effective in reversing sterility that stems from other disorders.

Long-term experimental tests of Clomid's effect on both animals and humans show it is less likely to cause multiple births than other similar compounds (see SN: 12/24/66). Scientists who conducted the tests for the manufacturer, the Wm. S. Merrell Company of Cincinnati, believe the reason for this is that Clomid itself does not contain gonadotrophins, the potent sex hormones released by the pituitary, but rather reminds the pituitary to produce them. Other fertility drugs do contain these hormones, which in even slight excess are likely to foster dangerous multiple births.

However, as with all known fertility drugs, Clomid does carry some risk of multiple births.