

Medical Sciences Notes

LIBEL

Salmonella Named After Doctor

The resolution of Representative Thomas M. Pelly (R-Wash.) asking that the name of the germ Salmonella be changed because it libels the famous salmon of his state runs into a medical custom of long standing.

The discoverer of a microorganism (in this case a pathologist named Daniel Elmer Salmon who died in 1914) is entitled to the honor of having it named after him.

Representative Pelly says he is hopeful that passage by Congress of his resolution will encourage medical journals and doctors to use some other term that will not do "violence to one of the greatest living resources of the sea."

Think of the medical dictionaries that would have to be re-written or revised—the textbooks of medicine that would become obsolete. Perhaps a label on canned salmon would help: something like, "This fish is simon pure." Or perhaps salmon could be called something else.

PUBLIC POLICY

Patient Consent Rules Eased

The Food and Drug Administration has proposed a revision of its regulations requiring written patient consent for use of experimental new drugs. FDA is relaxing its previous stand to allow "taking into consideration the physical and mental state of the patient to decide when it is necessary or preferable to obtain consent in other than written form."

The eased requirements would apply only to investigational drugs in their third or last phase of clinical testing before approval for general human use.

FDA believes other than written consent might be appropriate, for example, when a patient is in a coma or if he has a terminal disease but has not been told about it.

FDA's first patient consent regulations were issued in August 1966 after evidence showed some investigators were using experimental drugs without telling their patients.

BIOCHEMISTRY

Oxygen-Releasing Chemical Found

The flow of oxygen from red blood cells to body tissue is tied to a blood chemical that regulates the strength with which red cells hold on to oxygen, Columbia University scientists report.

Organic phosphate compounds formed in red cells from glucose and phosphate expedite the release of oxygen from hemoglobin when they are present in high concentrations. Conversely, when there are only small amounts of the phosphate compounds, red blood cells hold on to their oxygen, refusing to give it up, and thereby limit the supply of oxygen to the body.

A like mechanism of oxygen release is found in birds whose blood is known to unload oxygen more readily than man's. By adding phytic acid, the phosphate compound in birds' blood, to human hemoglobin, the release of oxygen can be stepped up to match that of birds.

Drs. Reinhold and Ruth E. Benesch will present their findings to the Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology meeting this month.

DIET FAD

Rigid Zen Diet Causes Scurvy

A rigid Zen diet that nearly caused a woman's death from scurvy is condemned by two New York Hospital physicians in the *JOURNAL OF THE AMERICAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION* of March 13.

Zen "macrobiotic" diets revolve around a nutritional system that claims to prevent and cure every disease, including dandruff, psychosis, arthritis, heart disease and cancer. The diets are largely vegetarian, with heavy emphasis on whole-grain cereals and the avoidance of sugar and fluid.

The 36-year-old scurvy patient's weight had fallen from 125 to 90 pounds on the strictest and "purest" of the Zen diets. She was eating no meat or fruit, drinking no milk or water. Her total liquid intake was 12 ounces of soup or tea daily, and her food was mainly limited to cooked brown rice, salted and sprinkled with sesame seeds.

Drs. Paul Sherlock and Edmund O. Rothschild, who report the case, say that although their patient recovered after receiving ascorbic acid, vitamins and a normal diet, several others who have been on the more rigid of Zen macrobiotic diets have reportedly died.

HORMONES

Male Hormones Output Studied

Men have the least amount of male hormone at about midnight and the largest amount after daybreak, an on-going study at New York Medical College shows. The study, reported by the American Cancer Society, may turn out to have many implications, both for human sex behavior and for the treatment of disease.

For example, there may be a propitious time for therapy, when hormones are administered for various abnormalities.

Men and women are believed to produce the same hormones, but the normal man produces about 20 times as much of the male hormone as the normal woman. Some masculine types of women produce more male hormone than normal, however. These women are unusually susceptible to cancer of the uterus lining.

Dr. A. Louis Southren and three co-workers measured the amounts of male hormone in the blood of normal men and women at various times of the day and night and found a regular diurnal cycle—a rhythmic rise and fall of the hormone—in males and pretty much a straight line in females.

LEUKEMIA RESEARCH

Human Leukemia Passed to Animals

Human leukemia has been successfully transmitted to Syrian hamsters. This is the first instance in which the disease has been passed definitely to animals, and the achievement opens a whole new series of doors for a concerted attack on the malignancy.

The work was directed by Dr. Sidney Farber of the Children's Cancer Research Foundation in Boston, one of the foremost institutions in this country involved in the problem of acute leukemia in children. Collaborating in the research, which used two lines of leukemic tissues from a girl and a boy, were Drs. George Foley, Richard Adams, Betty Uzman and Herbert Lazarus.