

Medical Sciences Notes

EPIDEMIOLOGY

Predisposition to Cancer

Baby girls born of older mothers are more likely to develop breast cancer later on, according to statistical studies reported in the July issue of the *JOURNAL OF THE NATIONAL CANCER INSTITUTE*.

Dr. Susan J. Standfast, an epidemiologist in residency at New York State Health Department, Albany, bases this conclusion on data compiled from birth certificates of 229 white women dying from breast cancer in upstate New York at ages 40 to 44. She compared them to a matched control group.

The relative risk of dying of breast cancer increased with maternal age beyond 30, and this association was most pronounced for daughters who did not marry.

Women born in cities also got breast cancer more often.

The studies uncovered an excess of deaths from this disease only in cities such as Rochester and Buffalo, with population of 175,000 or more. The statistical possibility that the differential could occur by chance, Dr. Standfast said, was one in 20.

SNAKE VENOM

Site of Bite Tells Tale

The identity of a snake can be told from venom at the site of the bite.

Two Melbourne, Australia, scientists have isolated serum taken from the region of simulated and actual snakebites to animals, and it has reacted specifically with a series of antivenenes. Antivenenes are made up of blood sera from animals that have been immunized against snakebites.

The most efficient treatment of snakebite is an adequate dose of the antivenene to the specific snake's venom, but in many cases the identity of the snake is not known.

The discovery, made by Dr. E. R. Trethewie of the University of Melbourne, and P. A. Rawlinson of Latrobe University, Melbourne, was reported in the current issue of the *Medical Journal of Australia*.

ORAL CONTRACEPTIVES

'Pill' Upsets Metabolism?

A new study on the effect of oral contraceptives—this time on women's metabolism—has been underwritten by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, Bethesda, Md.

Dr. Victor Wynn, researcher at the University of London, in England, has been awarded a \$43,120 contract to study the effects of the pill on carbohydrate, intermediary and lipid metabolism to see whether the changes produced are detrimental.

Preliminary studies indicate symptoms suggesting diabetes in some women. Dr. Wynn also has found changes in fatty substance and distribution of these lipids that could be linked to clogged arteries, or atherosclerosis.

About 1,000 women will take part in the study—500 in the test group and 500 using other contraceptive methods to serve as a comparison group.

In addition to these groups, 300 women who already have metabolic problems such as obesity, diabetes and adrenal gland malfunction, or who are receiving hormone

treatment, will be studied. Dr. Wynn also will study older women to determine the effects of oral contraception on metabolism before and after menopause.

OBSTETRICS

Thirteen Cesareans in One Woman

A graduate nurse who had 13 healthy, full-term babies delivered by low transverse cesarean section in 18 years is reported by a Providence, R.I., physician.

Other physicians have believed that the number of deliveries by this surgical method should be limited because of the necessity of cutting through the same scars, which in some women do not heal readily.

Dr. Alfred L. Potter's cases at Lying-In Hospital were first reported in the *RHODE ISLAND MEDICAL JOURNAL*. The July 17 issue of *MODERN MEDICINE* contains an abstract describing the method used, which, although contrary to the usual surgery, left no adhesions.

SAFETY

Shorter Cords; Squatter Pots

The serious burns children get when they yank an electric coffeepot off the table by tripping over the cord could be prevented by shorter cords and a short squatty pot with a firm base.

Dr. Richard E. Marland, chief of the Public Health Service's Injury Control Program, bases this idea on a study by a team of a new National Center for Urban and Industrial Health in Denver, Colo.

The first of its kind in the PHS, the investigative team has been studying accidental injuries at six Denver area hospitals since July 1965.

Burns from cigarettes, heating pads, floor furnaces, hot grease, motorcycle exhaust systems, hot water in bathtubs or showers, and explosions of liquefied gas in travel trailers or campers are also under study.

PULMONARY ARTERIES

Tube-Carried Enzyme Dissolves Clots

Rapid disappearance of blood clots in the lung arteries has been achieved through use of a tube through which the enzyme drug streptokinase has been carried directly to the area.

A team of physicians at St. Vincent's Hospital, Melbourne, Australia, will report details of their life-saving technique at a meeting of the College of Physicians in Sydney in October. Dr. W. M. C. Keane, the hospital's medical superintendent, said the method has saved two patients from almost certain death.

The survivors were a grandmother and a 35-year-old man. Both had massive clots in their lungs following operations last month. X-rays showed that the drug began to dissolve the clots immediately and had completely dissolved them in three days.

United States physicians observed that the number of lives usually saved in such situations is small and that the Australian success deserves commendation.

Dr. Keane said the new treatment requires delicate balance in the measurement of the drug and accurate control in applying it to the lung arteries.

Anticoagulant drugs or surgical removal of the clot have been used in many cases of pulmonary embolism, but these treatments have not always been successful.