

medical sciences

HEARING

Deafness linked to heart attacks, strokes

Hearing studies indicate that a decline in hearing ability, aside from some other organic reason, could be a warning of unhealthy veins or arteries, with high cholesterol levels to blame.

The waxy substance could be clogging blood vessels in connective tissues between the tiny hearing bones, thus impeding the person's ability to hear.

Prof. A. H. Ismail, a Purdue University researcher, with Homer Tolson, speculates that reducing the blood cholesterol level could improve hearing ability.

Earlier, Dr. Ismail had directed a physical fitness program showing that regular, rigorous exercise lowers blood cholesterol levels significantly. To examine the theory, the Purdue investigators set up a fitness program for about 70 faculty and staff members. Before the physical conditioning began, all participants were given a series of hearing tests, besides other measures of physical condition. At the end of the four-month program, hearing tests were given again.

Many showed improvement in hearing over the four months, and none showed a deficit. The researchers say that in some of the persons tested, the improvement was remarkable.

TRANSPLANTS

International registry proposed

Now that the world has seen almost 100 heart transplants in the past year, it is time to take this kind of surgery out of the realm of experimentation, a University of Chicago physician believes.

Dr. Leon Resnekov of the Pritzker School of Medicine says it will cost millions of dollars to collect information on the progress of all heart-transplant patients, but he advises the setting up of an international registry for this purpose.

At a meeting on heart transplantation in Chicago, Dec. 12, Dr. Resnekov said it was time "for a scientific appraisal of the success of such surgery to determine if it is worthwhile from the patient's point of view."

The surgical costs of heart transplants range from \$30,000 to \$40,000 per operation. Because long-term survival still has not been established, recipients are selected from hopeless cases.

The Chicago professor says he favors continuation of heart transplant work in conjunction with a research program that, hopefully, will make such surgery valuable for candidates including children with severe rheumatic fever or other disease affecting the heart, and also for young adults with primary heart muscle disease.

X-RAYS

Patients may be diagnosed with sprays

The discomfort of patients who are now diagnosed for troubles in the trachea and bronchus with a catheter or tube in the airways may soon be overcome. A preliminary report in the December issue of THE AMERICAN JOURNAL OF ROENTGENOLOGY, RADIUM THERAPY AND NUCLEAR MEDICINE indicates the possibility of painless

examinations using an aerosol spray to coat the air passages with material that can be seen on X-rays.

Drs. T. H. Johnson Jr. and W. J. Howland, radiologists at the University of Tennessee College of Medicine in Memphis, got their inspiration from hair sprays and aerosol anesthetics. So far they have tested the idea on rabbits and dogs, using barium sulfate suspensions. To avoid damage to the windpipe, they kept the pressure low.

TRANSPLANTS

Choosing recipients by computer

A program is being set up that will let computers decide which of several individuals waiting for a transplant is to receive an available organ.

Dr. Raymond D. A. Peterson, associate professor of pediatrics in the Pritzker School of Medicine at the University of Chicago, says the program will be a joint effort of three universities: the University of Illinois, the University of Wisconsin and Chicago.

The program involves tissue-typing laboratories in Chicago, Milwaukee and Madison, Wis. An organ will be classified according to 58 basic tissue types, and the data fed into a computer, which will have data on potential recipients. It will match the organ to the most compatible waiting patient, thus eliminating the need for a physician to decide who will get the organ.

BIRTH CONTROL

Intrauterine device gaining

The IUD, or intrauterine device, has long been advised in developing countries where women cannot afford to take oral contraceptives. The IUD costs only a few cents for long-time use. It also is reported gaining acceptance with more women in richer countries.

It is hard to estimate exactly what the usage is in comparing these two methods of birth control. Population experts say approximately six million women in the United States take pills, and another two million have the IUD inserted.

The current issue of FERTILITY AND STERILITY, the journal of the American Fertility Society, reports three studies on the two methods, rating their effectiveness. A new double-coil IUD called the Saf-T-Coil is reported 98.9 percent effective. A report from Moscow says Soviet public health officials have decided to begin mass manufacture of the IUD in preference to pills.

GERMAN MEASLES

Rubella usually attacks only once

No laboratory-proven case of a child getting German measles, or rubella, a second time is on record at the National Institutes of Health, Dr. John L. Sever says in the Dec. 16 issue of the JOURNAL OF THE AMERICAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION.

He says, however, that there have been reports of two children being born with the disease because their mothers had it while pregnant, then being re-infected. Because of variability in antibody tests, he advises careful follow-up of vaccination and original cases.

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