

medical sciences notes

SMOKING

Withdrawal clinics unsuccessful

Smoking withdrawal clinics at Roswell Park Memorial Institute, Buffalo, achieved only a 17 percent cure among 1,800 volunteers from 1964 to 1966, Dr. Charles A. Ross, chief of thoracic surgery, reports.

In the withdrawal program, which employed a combination of education and drugs, men were more successful in breaking the habit than women. Among the men, those over 40 were more successful than younger ones.

The Federal Trade Commission is evaluating cigarettes on a brand-for-brand basis for nicotine and tar content, Dr. Ross said at a meeting of the Western New York Section of the American Chemical Society. The evaluation should lead to proper labeling of cigarette packages, since lung cancer is directly related to the amount of tar reaching the lung. All attempts should be made to reduce this amount for people who can't stop smoking, Dr. Ross urges.

EMPHYSEMA

Giant cysts removed from lungs

Air cysts so large that they filled half of one or both chest cavities have been removed from the lungs of emphysema patients by a Mississippi surgical team without a single death.

Dr. William R. Fain, assistant chief of the surgical service of the Veterans Administration Hospital, Jackson, told the annual meeting of the National Tuberculosis and Respiratory Disease Association that 26 of the cysts had been removed over a period of seven years.

The patients, all men, ranged in age from 33 to 57 years, and all smoked. Severe shortness of breath was the principal symptom and the indication for surgery. Half of the men were able to return to work after recovery.

Deaths from emphysema, a condition in which the air sacs of the lungs become over-expanded and eventually break down, have doubled in the past five years. There has also been an increase in the number of large air cysts, sometimes called blebs, on the lungs of emphysema patients, but surgical removal is not always necessary, Dr. Fain said.

The risk of surgery for a giant cyst is less than that for lung cancer, he said, since the pulmonary function of a cyst patient improves from the moment the cyst is removed.

FACILITIES

Transplant unit opened

A new organ transplant unit has been opened at the University of Colorado Medical Center in Denver.

The \$251,000 unit, under construction since last summer, adds an eighth floor to the north wing of Colorado General Hospital and will provide facilities for a group of surgeons, physicians and research scientists that has pioneered the transplantation of human organs over the past six years.

The wing will house 10 beds for transplant patients

and laboratory, nursing and office space. It will house much of the clinical work and some of the basic scientific studies of a medical team headed by Dr. Thomas E. Starzl.

The team, operating in both the Colorado General and Denver Veterans Administration Hospitals, has performed kidney transplants on 193 patients, of whom 118 are living. Within the past nine months, the group has transplanted livers in seven patients, three of whom are living.

X-RAYS

No racial factor in dosage

There is no record that the American College of Radiology has ever advised physicians to alter the energy settings on X-ray machines because of the race of the patient, its officials say.

A charge was made on May 15 before the Senate Commerce Committee that Negro patients are given bigger doses of radiation in X-ray examinations than white people, but the college says the charge is false.

The energy level must be varied according to the body build of the patient, so that an obese man would get a greater amount of X-rays to produce a diagnostic film than a thin one. Similarly, a heavily muscled person with heavy bone structure would need more radiation than a flabby person of the same size. Skin color has no effect.

The college admits that some writers have suggested slightly higher dosage for Negroes than for whites. A few technical manuals mention race along with age, build, weight and other reasons for varying X-ray techniques. But actual practice of racial variation is believed extremely uncommon.

The American Dental Association says there is nothing in its policy or in dental literature regarding variation by race in X-ray techniques.

EPILEPSY

Seizures blamed on voices

The voices of three radio announcers threw a Wisconsin housewife into an epileptic seizure every time she heard them.

To confirm that the seizures were really brought on by the voices, Dr. Francis M. Forster, head of the neurology department at the University of Wisconsin's epilepsy center, Madison, and his associates obtained tapes of programs broadcast by each of the three announcers. In the center's laboratory, while the tapes were being played, the woman had nine attacks.

The treatment was repetition of the tapes until they no longer had any effect. Today the woman can twirl the dial and listen to any of the three. To thank the announcers for making special tapes to help in treatment, she telephoned them and talked to them personally without a seizure.

The report, in the May 17 issue of *MEDICAL WORLD NEWS*, states that variation in pitch, rhythm and stress of pronunciation by the announcers may have played a part in bringing on the attacks, but the doctors do not know what the primary cause was. Loud noises and certain music can have a similar effect.

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