

medical sciences

CANCER

German survey to study fever effects

There have been several studies of induced high fever as a treatment for cancer. A survey in Hamburg, Germany, beginning this fall may prove that fever prevents malignancy.

On the basis of a suggestion by Dr. Gerhard Schulz, a Hamburg physician, the survey will be carried on under the supervision of city health officials and the Federal Doctors' Association.

Dr. Schulz says he has observed patients who had high fevers and found them to be virtually immune to cancer for five years after their recovery.

Several hundred thousand persons among Hamburg's population of about two million are expected to take part in the test.

They will be asked to report their health condition over a period of several years in the search for those who have had high fevers and those who have not. Then incidence of cancer will be compared.

BLOOD BANKING

Contraceptives and green plasma

Blood banks usually discard plasma units if they have a green color, which usually indicates a bacterial infection, such as pseudomonas, that could cause shock if the plasma is used for transfusion.

But Dr. Paul L. Wolf, a pathologist at Stanford University Medical Center, has found another cause for green plasma. He suggests that blood banks test their green plasma further before discarding it.

He found that the blood plasma of women who have been taking birth control pills has a blue-green color due to a copper-containing protein caused by the female hormone estrogen.

The protein, called ceruloplasmin, is found in pregnant women when estrogen hormones are elevated. If estrogens are administered alone they produce a markedly increased amount of blue-green plasma protein. For some unknown reason elevated levels of ceruloplasmin are also found in patients with rheumatoid arthritis.

He reports his findings in the July 24 *NEW ENGLAND JOURNAL OF MEDICINE*. Co-authors of the report are Derek Enlander, Joanne Dalziel and Janelle Swanson.

ACCIDENTS

Safety belts suggested for beds

So many persons die from falling out of bed that a West German physician says beds should be sold with safety belts.

Dr. Wolfgang Littek of the Bavarian Chamber of Insurance Companies in Munich made the suggestion after a survey disclosed that 600 West Germans were killed by falling out of bed last year. The survey says 80 percent of German adults fall out of bed several times a year. Most of the fatal falls are caused by nightmares or drunkenness.

However, Dr. Littek says the safety-belt idea would be particularly beneficial for elderly people.

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ABORTION

Single women in Britain have more

Since the Abortion Act in Britain came into force in April 1968, more single women have taken advantage of it than married women.

The breakdown of figures for 1968 included 251 girls under the age of 16, and 1,418 between 16 and 19. Nearly 3,000 were aged 20 to 34; 100 were 35 to 44 and two were 45 or over.

Adding 841 widowed, divorced and separated women, the number outside the married state who had abortions rose to 5,553 for the last quarter alone. Only 4,306 married women were listed for that quarter.

Figures from the British Registrar-General show a total of 22,256 abortions in England and Wales during the period April 27 to Dec. 31, 1968, of which single women account for 47 percent.

During the three months from March to May this year, a total of 881 women from abroad had private abortions in Britain—seven percent of all abortions during that period.

HORMONES

Computer follows patients

People who have had large parts of their thyroid gland destroyed, either by surgery or radio-iodine treatment, can develop conditions that need treatment with thyroid hormone, a Scottish professor told the British Medical Association meeting in Aberdeen.

Dr. James Crooks of Dundee University estimated that the condition was undiagnosed in up to one-fifth of the cases, and said a computer is needed to follow patients to give them and their doctors yearly automatic warnings that a check is due.

He said there are 80,000 patients in Britain and 286,000 in the United States whose thyroid gland has been destroyed by treatment and who need watching. By using the computer at the university, he said, 90 percent of patients have been followed successfully and treated when they needed it.

FIRST AID

Portable resuscitator

A portable device for artificial respiration called RD-1 is being hailed in the Soviet Union.

Developed by the Research Institute of Instrument Making, in cooperation with researchers of the Institute of Automation and Telemechanics of the U.S.S.R. Academy of Sciences, RD-1 has been tested at various hospitals and will be produced in quantity this year.

If pressure in a patient's lungs drops by two-thousandths of an atmosphere, RD-1 is alerted to assist with breathing. It can adjust to the rhythm of a patient's respiration when it is so small that even an experienced physician would not notice it. It has aided in reanimating eight patients and has been used in 140 operations.

The device operates from a tank with compressed air or oxygen and weighs 13.2 pounds. It also can operate with an anesthetic apparatus.