

medical sciences

Gathered from the American Medical Association's Clinical Convention in Miami Beach

EPILEPSY

Injuries to head do not aggravate seizures

Epilepsy is not a disease, but a physical malfunction, a Johns Hopkins University pediatrician says. Dr. Samuel Livingston has followed the cases of 20,000 adult and child patients during the past 32 years.

In most cases, he points out, an epileptic can lead a normal life. Children, especially, should be treated as normally as possible.

One fear that makes parents over-protective is that if a child subject to seizures is allowed to play freely with other children he may be hit or fall in such a way that his disorder will be aggravated. But Dr. Livingston finds no evidence that epilepsy is aggravated by a head injury.

SPORTS

Football players faint from heart arrest

When a husky football player doesn't get up after a particularly heavy tackle, he may have cardiac arrest and require immediate medical attention.

At the tenth annual conference on the Medical Aspects of Sports in Miami Beach, which preceded the American Medical Association's scientific program at the clinical convention, Dr. Stephen W. Carveth of Lincoln, Nebr., explained how the University of Nebraska's "third team" saved five lives in the first three seasons it has watched behind the lines.

He recommends similar medical teams for any other gathering that generates excitement—even political conventions.

Bryan Memorial Hospital at Lincoln provides equipment and necessary drugs. A cardiovascular surgeon is on the team, and the unit includes two to four nurses who are trained in coronary care, two cardiopulmonary technicians and one inhalation therapy technician.

DIABETES

Eighth leading cause of death

There are now more than four million diabetics in the United States, and almost one-half of them are undiagnosed, Dr. Donnell D. Etwiler suggests.

Dr. Etwiler, who is director of the Diabetes Detection and Education Center in Minneapolis, estimates that 22 percent of this country's population carries the recessive gene for the disease.

Diabetes now constitutes the third leading cause of blindness and the eighth cause of death in the U.S.

ARTERY HARDENING

Dilating technique prevents leg amputation

Dilating clogged arteries with a catheter led to improvement in about 80 percent of patients treated for narrowing of leg arteries in the general area of thighs and knees, a University of Oregon professor reports.

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Dr. Charles T. Dotter, chairman of the department of radiology, says after his treatment approximately 175 patients since Jan. 16, 1964, showed improvement. His youngest patient was 42; the oldest, 87.

Dr. Dotter puts his patients under local anesthesia and uses an arterial needle to enter the groin area of the artery. The putty-like core of the clogged vessel is entered with a tightly wound coil-spring guide about three feet long and the width of a pencil. The guide is manipulated downstream through the narrowing core to the clear arterial passageway beyond. Motion-picture X-rays monitor the next step in which a taper-tipped radiopaque catheter is slipped over the guide into the artery.

Next, a larger catheter is advanced over the first tube to make a wider passage through the core.

DIVERTICULOSIS

Problem of the aged

Controversy has arisen over the proper treatment of the aging who develop diverticulosis—a pouching out of the intestinal wall that affects one-third of those over 65 years old, Dr. David Befeler reports.

When inflammation occurs, diverticulosis becomes diverticulitis, and many patients who are hospitalized for this condition will require surgery.

"While some groups enthusiastically propose to remove the entire diseased segment of colon in one operation," says Dr. Befeler, "we have chosen a less radical approach at St. Vincent's Hospital and Medical Center in New York City."

Each patient should be individually evaluated, he believes, but older patients should be treated with great conservatism. The most recent evidence points to increased pressure within the colon because of muscular weakening. The increased pressure results in a lack of normal tone or strength called atony. This condition of intestinal stasis frequently causes constipation and intestinal kinks along with other symptoms.

If medical treatment fails, surgery must be done as a last resort.

CANCER

Cigars and pipes dangerous to mouth

Cigars and pipes are often looked on as a safer substitute for cigarette smoking; few persons inhale when smoking them. This may help prevent lung cancer.

But tobacco can still cause trouble in the mouth, no matter how it gets there.

Oral cancer kills more than 7,000 persons annually and afflicts about 36,000 individuals a year. Only about 29 percent with oral cancer can expect to live longer than five years.

Maj. Gen. Robert B. Shira, chief of the Army Dental Corps, says in an editorial in the November *JOURNAL OF ORAL SURGERY* that oral cancer occurs more frequently in cigar and pipe smokers and in chain cigarette smokers than in control groups.