

# medical sciences

## DIAGNOSIS

### Henry VIII was punch drunk

King Henry VIII behaved erratically in his later years because he became punch drunk through sporting activities and not, as is commonly believed, because he had syphilis, says Dr. Norman Barrett of St. Thomas's Hospital, London.

Henry undoubtedly suffered from something. He had been very fit during the first 20 years of his reign and was the leading athlete in Europe. But in the space of a few years he changed from a reasonable man to "a complete beast," says Dr. Barrett.

He says he does not believe the king had syphilis. Henry's three mistresses were all healthy, so he could not have caught it from them. He had four surviving children; as syphilis is congenital they would almost certainly have suffered from it too, if he had had it.

In late stages, syphilitics go mad. "In my opinion, Henry was never insane," Dr. Barrett says. "Two months before he died, he opened Parliament personally and made a speech from the throne lasting three-quarters of an hour, without a note. If you read the records of that speech, you will see it was not the speech of a madman."

Dr. Barrett says the king jousted regularly for 20 years and was hurt a number of times. After one incident, at Greenwich in 1536, he changed completely in character.

## PREGNANCY

### High weight gain urged

A woman who is trying to keep her weight gain to 15 pounds or less during pregnancy may be reducing her own lean body mass at a time when her baby's nutrition should be uppermost in her thoughts.

Dr. Howard N. Jacobson, associate professor of obstetrics and gynecology at the University of California in San Francisco, says a gain of 24 to 30 pounds during pregnancy is more reasonable.

Dr. Jacobson says in the Jan. 27 *JOURNAL OF THE AMERICAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION* that the products of conception reach a total of about 21 pounds, 5 to 10 pounds more than the commonly recommended weight gain.

## ACNE

### Vitamin A promising

The stubborn resistance of the pimples of adolescence commonly called acne appears to have been brought under control, in 144 adolescents at least, by a lotion containing vitamin A acid.

Dr. Albert M. Kligman of the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia says 72 percent of 200 adolescents who were followed through several treatment methods proved that the lotion is superior to all other available preparations.

The way it works is to prevent the formation of the dry plug sometimes called a comedone or blackhead. By penetrating the skin as a slight irritant, the acid forces dead cells that would otherwise cause trouble to slough off.

The theory that the secret of acne was in the sebum or oil secreted by the skin has been discarded by Dr. Kligman's team of researchers. He says they have tested sebum in every way they could think of and can't find any difference in the oil produced by normal skin and by that of a person with acne. The acne patient only produces more of it.

## MOUNTAIN SICKNESS

### Drugs for the symptoms

The drugs morphine, furosemide and acetazolamide are being used in the treatment of acute mountain sickness in India.

The tests are based on work by Dr. Inder Singh of the Armed Forces Medical Services in New Delhi, with five collaborators. They treated 1,925 soldiers made ill in the Himalayas where 30,000 Indian troops are committed, shuttling frequently between sea level and 18,000 feet.

The Jan. 23 issue of *THE NEW ENGLAND JOURNAL OF MEDICINE* reports Dr. Singh's work. An editorial by Dr. Milton Landowne, a U.S. Army researcher in Natick, Mass., who has studied the effects of acute mountain sickness on American soldiers in the Colorado mountains, points out that the benefit of the drugs may be the removal of extracellular fluid.

Dr. Singh says morphine can be used with impunity to allay anxiety and restlessness. It also increases kidney action when used with the diuretic furosemide, overcoming another common symptom of mountain sickness.

## AUTO DRIVING

### When to stop

The time comes when some older people should stop driving a car, even if it seems necessary for their business transportation. They are as dangerous as if they were drunk.

An insufficiency of blood to the brain can suddenly impair a driver's ability without warning, a group of University of Michigan researchers say in the Jan. 27 issue of the *JOURNAL OF THE AMERICAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION*.

A 61-year-old man, for example had four blackouts before he went to a hospital for an evaluation of his symptoms. He refused an operation that might have improved the circulation, and he continued to drive against his doctor's advice.

The consequences of one of his attacks could be catastrophic, and his case is typical of many others. On this account, regulations governing the licensing of motor-vehicle drivers are undergoing scrutiny and revision in many states. Drs. William J. Foley and S. Martin Lindenauer, with Michael E. McGinn, a premedical student at Marquette University, Milwaukee, emphasize that police are responsible along with doctors in evaluating a driver's condition aside from drunkenness.

A California study shows that persons who are mentally disturbed, epileptics, unstable diabetics and patients with symptomatic coronary artery disease have twice as many accidents as a comparison group. Cerebrovascular insufficiency is equally dangerous.