

# medical sciences

## ALCOHOLISM

### Kidney dialysis sobers patients

A half-day treatment on a kidney machine at the Baltimore City Hospital has helped alcoholics to dry out, the Feb. 28 issue of *MEDICAL WORLD NEWS* reports.

Instead of being sent for days to the drunk ward to sober up, the acutely intoxicated chronic alcoholics are hooked up to a kidney dialysis machine and in six hours are completely sober. Apparently removing the alcohol along with other poisons from the blood does the job more efficiently than does the body unassisted.

Dr. Arnold I. Walder, assistant chief of surgery, finds that alcoholics who are thus treated remain sober for a longer time than is usual. One man came back for surgery three weeks later, saying he had not had a drop to drink.

Although Dr. Walder and his assistants have used the dialysis method on only six patients so far, they believe the results are so good that dialysis will become the treatment of choice wherever equipment is available.

## FROZEN BLOOD

### Cheaper storage in Swedish bag

Researchers in the United States and abroad are investigating plastic sacks for use in the storage of frozen blood. Dr. Maurice Green, a Red Cross research scientist, is working with the National Heart Institute in Bethesda, Md., in evaluating various materials that will be inexpensive as well as safe for storing different blood components and whole blood.

A report from Sweden states that a group of medical researchers at the University of Uppsala has developed new containers made of Capton and Teflon film. They are said to be easier to store and handle than the usual metal containers, and to contribute to a reduction in blood transfusion costs of between 20 and 25 percent. They are not affected by the low temperature (minus 330 degrees F.) of the freezing medium.

## DENTISTRY

### Surgery outside the office

There is hardly a form of dental activity in education, research or service that is not being conducted in some hospital in the United States, the March issue of *DENTAL ABSTRACTS* points out.

Perhaps the patient is admitted for some condition requiring long-term care such as heart disease, cancer or stroke. On the other hand he may be in good health but require dental surgery that cannot be performed in the dentist's office.

Neighborhood health centers funded through the Office of Economic Opportunity or the Children and Youth Programs supported by the Children's Bureau are being focused in hospitals. Dental care will be given to some 50 percent of the population that is unaccustomed to it.

Dentists are advised against bringing fixed equipment to hospital surgery. The dental surgeons must converge to within 6 to 10 inches of the patient's oral cavity, and with fixed equipment this is impossible.

## RADIATION

### Handbook defines levels

A great deal has been written recently on the dangers of radiation from certain ores (SN: 12/28, p. 638) so the news of an international handbook setting forth permissible levels to which a worker may be safely exposed is promising.

Published jointly by the International Labor Organization and the International Atomic Energy Agency, which are United Nations agencies, the 108-page handbook is designed to facilitate the adoption of new national legislation, as well as the preparation of national and local regulations and factory rules.

The code sets forth the means of insuring protection against ionizing radiations: general provisions, radiation surveillance, medical surveillance and special provisions relating to protective measures and equipment for the control of radioactive dust and gases.

Specific measures that could put the code into practice in both uranium and thorium mines and mills, cover such matters as mining operations, ventilation systems, protective clothing, use of respirators and product packing.

## HEART TRANSPLANTS

### Number of donors drops

Both laymen and surgeons have become faint-hearted about heart transplants, Dr. Denton A. Cooley of Houston, Tex., complained at a meeting of the American College of Cardiology in New York.

Dr. Cooley disagreed with Dr. Michael E. DeBakey, also of Houston, at a press conference. Dr. DeBakey said the high mortality rate of patients was the cause of public discouragement.

The rejection and infection problems remain unsolved, and although Dr. Cooley has performed the greatest number of transplants in the world, he has had to stop operating for lack of donors.

## HOME SAFETY

### Carbon tet and wig cleaning

One of the most popular spot removers for many years, carbon tetrachloride has also turned out to be one of the most dangerous chemicals readily available.

So serious is the effect of inhaling the quick-evaporating fluid on the kidneys and other organs that the Food and Drug Administration plans hearings soon that could put the chemical off the household cleaner market.

The latest example of carbon tet's ill effects is reported in the *British Medical Journal* for Feb. 22 by Dr. Ronald J. Weir of the Victoria Infirmary in Glasgow.

Dr. Weir says a British nurse made the mistake of cleaning her 14-inch wig with carbon tet in a small unventilated bedroom, and ended up in the hospital for three weeks with kidney and liver symptoms.

It has long been known that the chemical is dangerous. In 1909 it was discovered that a dry hair shampoo containing carbon tet could cause poisoning and death. Present labeling warns against using it in an unventilated place.

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