

SURGERY

Gallbladder Surgery for Persons Over 60 Safe

➤ PERSONS over 60 years of age are as good a risk for gallbladder operations as are persons under 60, Dr. Alec Horwitz of George Washington University School of Medicine, Washington, has reported.

Old age alone is not enough to prevent early surgical removal of gallstones that have become malignant, Dr. Horwitz said. Of 300 gallbladder operations he has performed, 67 were on patients over 60. There were no deaths, even among those with complications.

The Washington doctor cautions, however, that it is wise to eradicate gallbladder disease before old age overtakes the patient and before other diseases and complications occur, even when the gallstones produce no symptoms.

Reporting in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* (July 21), Dr. Horwitz says that there is a "very great increase" in the incidence of inflammation of the gallbladder, common duct obstruction and cancer of the gallbladder in persons over 60.

Delay in surgery, he points out, must be avoided because the aged person deteriorates rapidly.

In the urgent case, he suggests, quick treatment, gentle and rapid but unhurried, smoothly efficient operating-room teamwork and skillful anesthesia will be repaid by fewer deaths or serious illness.

Science News Letter, August 4, 1956

AERONAUTICS

Some Relief Foreseen For Crowded Air Lanes

➤ SOME RELIEF for crowded air lanes and the possible mid-air collisions they can cause is foreseen through use of a new altimeter now being installed in Air Force planes.

Developed by the Air Research and Development Command in cooperation with Kollsman Instrument Corp., Elmhurst, N. Y., the new altimeter is 400% more accurate below 50,000 feet, and 100% more accurate above that altitude than those now in use.

It will allow the Air Force safely to decrease the vertical distance between aircraft in flight from 2,000 to 1,000 feet.

The greatest altimeter error allowable has been much reduced by the new instrument, which can maintain its accuracy at temperatures from 31 degrees below Fahrenheit to 158 degrees above. Maximum error at 10,000 feet, formerly 350 feet, is reduced to only 80 feet; at 80,000 feet, it is cut in half to 1,500 feet.

Called the MA-1 altimeter, the instrument has greater accuracy due to a more sensitive diaphragm, better mechanical linkage and improved materials that operate more dependably under temperature changes.

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