

MEDICINE

Smoking Linked to Ills

► THE SECOND part of the full report on a 44-month follow-up of a study to correlate smoking and death rate indicates not only a high relationship between smoking and lung cancer, but also several other common diseases.

The smoking-disease relationships, published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* (March 15), show:

1. An extremely high association for a few diseases, such as cancer of the lungs, larynx, esophagus and gastric ulcers.

2. A very high association for a few diseases, such as pneumonia and influenza, and duodenal ulcer, aortic aneurysm (formation of a blood-filled sac in the main arterial trunk), and cancer of the bladder.

3. A high association for coronary artery disease, cirrhosis of the liver, and cancer of several sites or malignant tumors which have spread to other parts of the body.

The much-publicized statistical study by Drs. E. Cuyler Hammond and Daniel Horn of the American Cancer Society also indicates there was little or no association between smoking and chronic rheumatic fever, hypertensive heart disease, or other hypertensive diseases, nephritis, nephrosis, diabetes, leukemia, cancer of the rectum, colon or brain.

The relative importance of the associations

listed is dependent upon the number of deaths attributed to each disease, as well as on their degrees of association with cigarette smoking, Drs. Hammond and Horn explain.

It was found that the death rate of men with lung cancer who had given up cigarette smoking a year previous to enrollment in the study of 187,783 men was lower than the death rate for those men who continued to smoke until death. This extreme rate was found to hold true in rural as well as urban areas.

A total of 7,316 deaths occurred among men with a history of regular cigarette smoking, where only 4,651 would have occurred if the age-specific death rates of the smokers had been the same as for men who never smoke, the control group. The difference of 2,665 may be considered as "excess," the doctors point out.

Coronary disease accounted for over half of these excess deaths, lung cancer and cancer of other sites accounted for almost 14% each. Other heart and circulatory diseases, 5.8%, and pulmonary, cerebral vascular lesions, gastric and duodenal ulcers, cirrhosis of the liver and all other diseases combined made up the remaining percentages of these excess deaths.

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Drug Treats Allergies

► A NEW HORMONE has been used successfully in the treatment of many skin and allergic diseases that were formerly difficult to control and treat with known drugs.

The drug, known as Medrol, or methylprednisolone, is a member of the corticosteroid family, a branch of the compound cortisone, which fights inflammation and arthritis. It was developed by the Upjohn Company.

At a conference on Medrol, meeting in Augusta, Mich., leading medical scientists and clinicians heard reports on treatment with the hormone.

Dr. Lawrence C. Goldberg of Cincinnati, Ohio, reported that alopecia areata, patchy loss of hair on the face and head, responded to treatment with the drug. A 67-year-old man who had no eyebrows and had not shaved more than twice a week for 15 years, grew a full beard and eyebrows and was shaving daily after two months of treatment.

Skin ailments such as psoriasis, seborrheic dermatitis, allergic skin reactions and hives, all responded satisfactorily to doses of Medrol, Dr. Goldberg reported.

He also noted that 15 of his patients had heart disease, six were diabetics, and eight had histories of peptic ulcers, in addition to skin ailments. All responded favorably to the drug. Formerly, treatment with the older corticosteroids in such cases was impossible, the doctor said.

Dr. W. K. Grater of Dallas, Texas, reported 128 successful treatments out of 138 patients with allergic disorders. In addition to the successful treatment of such disorders, he said, the hormone does not produce the undesirable side effects of some of the older corticosteroids, such as retention of salt and water by the body, or the flare-up of peptic ulcers. Such undesirable reactions have been a major criticism of the older drugs.

Dr. Frank X. Dwyer, Kansas City, Mo., reported finding that Medrol proved more effective than any of the hormones previously used to treat psoriasis. He held out hope that hormone treatment of skin problems will have fewer side effects, such as sleepiness, weakness and loss of appetite, among others, a problem which has long plagued skin specialists.

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Restore Arthritics To Useful Lives

► RHEUMATOID arthritic patients may find new hope in a modern combination of drug treatment and physical rehabilitation which restores in some cases their independence and usefulness.

A five-year study of 38 patients severely crippled by rheumatoid arthritis demon-

strated clear-cut gains in the patients' physical capacity while under treatment. Eleven of these 38 were able to be placed in part or full-time employment or into colleges at the end of the five-year period. The study was conducted by the Institute of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation at New York University-Bellevue Medical Center.

Rheumatoid arthritis is a chronic and progressive disease. However, the majority of the patients in the study held on to substantial proportions of their gains.

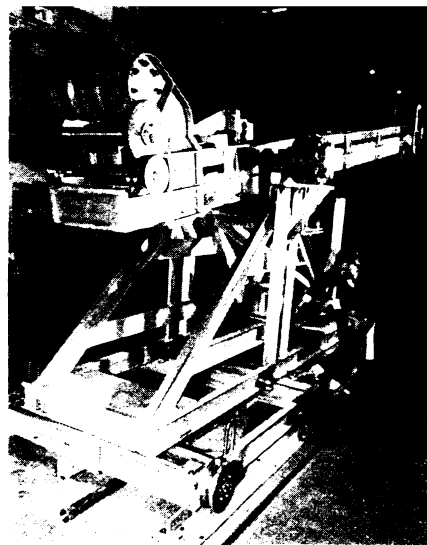
During the first two years of the study, the patients were hospitalized. Treatment consisted of medical, physical and occupational therapy, remedial exercises, training in activities of daily living, social, psychological and vocational counseling. Medical treatment included administration of hormone drugs such as corticosteroids.

Dr. Edward W. Lowman, clinical director, published his report in the current issue of *Arthritis and Rheumatism*. He rates patient motivation as the most important factor that probably influenced the patients' chance to help himself back to self-sufficiency.

Other factors included: intensity of the disease process, extent of already inflicted damage on a joint structure, and the patient's use of self-help devices.

"This study, the first of its kind," commented Dr. Russell L. Cecil, medical director of the Arthritis and Rheumatism Foundation, "substantiates the opinion of many leading rheumatologists that at least 75% of all patients suffering from arthritis can be saved by a judicious combination of medical and physical therapy."

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HANDLING DEVICE—This machine, built for the Westinghouse Electric Corporation by the mechanical division of General Mills, is designed to handle radioactive materials in experimental containers or "thimbles." These containers are inserted by remote control through the bottom of the reactor vessel into the core for testing.