

SURGERY

Much Surgery Needless

➤ A CONSIDERABLE AMOUNT of needless surgery is being performed on gastric ulcer cases because of the fear of malignancy, a group of West Coast doctors has found.

The fear of malignancy in gastric ulcer cases that do not seem to respond to therapy immediately, plus the inability of radiologists to differentiate between benign and malignant ulcers, has resulted in the needless removal of stomachs.

Many of these patients, had they been given a strict therapeutic routine, could have avoided surgery, said the doctors, all from the Veterans Administration Center, University of Southern California.

A nine-year study of serious gastric ulcers, those that previously would not heal or were found to recur, has led the doctors to favor their therapeutic treatment instead of immediate surgery.

The management of gastric ulcers by the California investigators included thorough diagnostic measures. This meant X-ray determination of the type of ulcer, if possible. This was followed by an internal examination of the stomach and diagnosis of cells shed from the diseased area of the stomach. Biopsy, gastric analysis, complete diagnostic work-up and strict therapeutic routine followed.

ANTHROPOLOGY

Bird Cry Sets Calendar

➤ SOME of the native calendars of mountainous northern Luzon in the Philippines are regulated by neither the sun nor the moon, but by certain recurring events of nature.

To this day, the hard-working farmers of Bontoc are able to inspire the envy of their neighbors by stuffing their granaries full of rice procured through setting their calendars to the cry of a baby bird, Dr. William Henry Scott, Farmingdale anthropologist, reports in the *American Anthropologist* (June).

One should start to sow, these people believe, when the baby killing bird can only chirp "ki-ik." When it has developed its full-throated "kiling," transplanting should begin. On this bird-directed schedule, the rice will flourish when the mountain streams are swollen and be ready for harvest before the water courses dry up again.

The Igorots do not count the passage of time at all, or at least nothing in their native language indicates they do. They do not reckon their own ages or know how many years ago a specific thing happened.

They do not even use ordinal numbers to indicate the order in which events took place. Parents speak of an eldest or youngest child but not of a third or a fourth, and there are parents who do not even recall which of their children was born first.

In the Mountain Province, the year is

Of more than 200 cases of benign-appearing gastric ulcers, which might have been surgically removed for suspected malignancy, 50% responded to the strict routine therapy and healed within a six-week period, the doctors told a group attending the World Congress of Gastroenterology in Washington.

Therapeutic measures included complete bed rest, regular doses of antacids, special diet, sedatives and a preparation that inhibits mouth secretions.

If this regimen of care were followed, it would remove from the minds of physicians and patients the fear of malignancy as the prime reason for surgery, one of the doctors said. Therefore, a much smaller number of patients would undergo surgery.

In conclusion, the doctors stressed the following:

1. Surgery is not indicated for all gastric ulcers.
2. Fear of malignancy is not a reasonable indication for operating on benign-appearing ulcers.
3. The average death rate throughout the country for surgery when malignancy is suspected exceeds the risk of this recommended therapeutic treatment.

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the severe pain accompanying this disease. Many patients, however, after taking colchicine orally, experience gastrointestinal upset and pain almost as severe as the gout symptoms themselves.

Patients who suffered gastrointestinal pain when given oral doses of the drug were switched to intravenous administration with an intravenous preparation of colchicine.

The results showed that the switch produced relief of the acute gouty attack more promptly and considerably reduced the gastrointestinal upset, Drs. J. E. Seegmiller, K. Lemone Yielding and Leonard Laster, Arthritis and Rheumatism Branch of the National Institute of Arthritis and Metabolic Diseases, Bethesda, Md., have reported.

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MEDICINE

Improve Gout Treatment By Switch to Intravenous

➤ A SWITCH in the method of administering an anti-gout drug has eliminated one of the big headaches facing many gout patients.

Colchicine, a well-known fighter of gouty arthritis, has long been known to relieve