

Four Lines for Cancer Research

Medicine

In a report never before made public, the sub-committee on cancer research appointed by the conference of consultants called by the Surgeon-General of the U. S. Public Health Service, suggested that the Public Health Service could carry on cancer research along four lines: statistical study, study of occupational cancer, study of the general biochemistry of the cell, and study of various phases of radiation. This is the report which Senator Wesley Jones, chairman of the Senate Commerce Committee and its new cancer subcommittee, has mailed to scientists throughout the country in order to get their opinions. Later it will be discussed at the hearings of the cancer subcommittee.

"The United States was the first government to publish a statistical volume on the mortality from cancer," stated the report. This volume gives all the facts obtainable from the Census records up to 1914. It should now be complemented by another volume covering the time since 1914, the committee advised. The study of occupational cancer cannot be carried on by private institutions

so well as by the government, because the material is so widely scattered.

"For example, we know but little of the cancers of tar workers in the United States," stated the report, "of the occurrence of cancer in garage workers, whose hands are continually in contact with oils; of the spatter-burn cancers seen in workers in the steel mills; of brass and dye workers' cancer. If the widely scattered information concerning these types of cancer could be collected and studied, facts important both to the problem of the causation of cancer and to industry would be immediately obtainable."

More fundamental researches on the general biochemistry of the cell which might be carried out in existing laboratories were summarized as follows:

"Tissue cultures offer one method of approaching this problem. We still lack information as to the difference between the cancer cell and the normal cell. If cancer cells and normal cells can be grown continuously in culture and the difference noted between the two, either in

morphology or in response to radiation, or to physical or chemical agents, it might lead to the discovery of methods, chemo-therapeutic or other, which would damage the cancer cells and leave healthy cells untouched. If this happy discovery could be made we would be approaching a cure for cancer. Similar general biological work should be encouraged at institutions like the Marine Biological Laboratory at Woods Hole, which would lead to greater knowledge of the cause of growth and death of cells. Any investigation of this type may well be expected to throw light upon the cancer problem which is largely an understanding of the uncontrollable growth of certain groups of cells in the human body."

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The largest and richest emerald mines in Colombia are the property of the Colombian government.

All types of athletics have been brought under government control in Italy, and physical training for children under 17 years is now compulsory.

Senate to Probe Cancer Research

Medicine

Is there anything which the U. S. Government can do to aid science in its battle to find the cause and cure of cancer?

The Senate of the United States wishes to learn the answer to this question, and in order to get it, a subcommittee of the Commerce Committee is beginning hearings, at which Surgeon General H. S. Cumming of the U. S. Public Health Service, and perhaps other scientists will appear.

The hearings are due to the passage recently of the Harris resolution, whereby the "Commerce Committee of the Senate or a subcommittee thereof, is authorized and directed to make a thorough investigation of the means and methods whereby the Federal Government may aid in discovering a successful and practical cure for cancer, and to report to Congress as soon as practicable the results of such investigation together with its recommendations for legislation and appropriations."

Senator Wesley Jones, chairman of the Commerce Committee, who will

also be chairman of the cancer subcommittee, states that he is not sure at this time that the Federal Government can or should make any special appropriations for the cancer work.

"Many individual institutions are doing splendid work," he said, "and sometimes we get better results by not expanding in too many directions. However, if there is anything the government can do, and any appropriations which ought to be made, we want to know it, so that we can act accordingly."

Specialists from all over the country will be called before the committee, other members of which are Senators Harris of Georgia, Vandenberg of Michigan, McNary of Oregon, and Copeland of New York, the latter being a physician.

One of the first steps to be taken by the cancer subcommittee is to obtain from Surgeon General Cumming a list of medical men and surgeons who attended a cancer conference called by the Public Health Service in April, 1928.

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Sun Relics in Exhibition

Archaeology

Sun baskets, little Sun-god images, and shields bearing symbols of stars and sun are among the Indian relics which the United States is sending to the Institute of Actinology at Paris this summer. The institute is to display the therapeutic activities of light, and also exhibits showing the attitudes of people of the past in regard to the sun.

There appears to be no reason to believe that the American Indians took sun baths or understood the therapeutic value of sunlight, according to Dr. Walter Hough, of the U. S. National Museum, who is preparing the Indian exhibit. But practically all the Indians had a sun cult and looked upon the sun as a source of great power. Articles selected for the Paris exhibition will illustrate chiefly this aspect of Indian life. The Pueblos of the Southwest dedicated their children to the sun at its rising in a beautiful ceremony, Dr. Hough points out. The Pueblos also used in their ceremonies wands that were painted to represent the sun, the clouds, rain, and corn.

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