

PSYCHIATRY

Medical Association Issues Warning Against Operation

“Frontal Lobotomy,” Which Makes Frontal Lobes Useless, Is Still in Experimental Stage, AMA Journal Says

WARNING against the widespread general use of a brain operation known to physicians as “frontal lobotomy” and publicized in recent years as a way of literally “cutting worry from the brain” is contained in a current *Journal of the American Medical Association* editorial. (Aug. 16)

Scientific knowledge is admittedly meager regarding the exact function of the important part of the brain, the frontal lobes. But claim has been made for this operation, which severs the fibers of both frontal lobes, and renders them useless, that it removes anxiety and impulses to commit suicide and murder.

“In spite of these ‘improvements’ in the mental condition of some patients,” declares the editorial, “this operation should not be considered capable of transforming a psychotic personality into a normal one. Even in our present state of ignorance concerning the frontal lobes, there is ample evidence of the serious defects produced by their removal in nonpsychotic persons. It is inconceivable that any procedure which

effectively destroys the function of this portion of the brain could possibly restore the person concerned to a wholly normal state.

“In a few instances frontal lobotomy has resulted in convulsions, which did not appear until months or even years after the operation.”

The operation, the editorial states, should be considered as in an experimental stage. The evidence of its effects so far do justify further experimentation. But “its use may well be restricted to persons who have received the benefits, if any, of all less drastic forms of therapy that are recognized by modern psychiatry; to persons in whom there is no doubt, because of the long duration and the nature of the illness, that their condition is both serious and otherwise permanent.”

The editorial warning is based on information brought to light in a panel discussion at a recent meeting of the American Medical Association in which specialists told of the good and bad effects resulting from the frontal lobotomy operation.

Science News Letter, September 6, 1941

resume his profession.”

Less serious, though bad enough in their way, are injuries to tendons and the cup- or sac-like ligament that unites the upper arm bone and the shoulder-blade. When the powerful jerks that pitching involves cause nothing worse than local lesions (internal bruises), these can be taken care of by heat treatment—the “baking out” familiar to all athletes.

Sometimes the condition is worse, involving a frayed tendon. In certain locations this can be remedied by surgical treatment; in others, present surgical technique hardly justifies the risk, says Dr. Bennett.

Pitcher’s sore arm frequently is caused not so much by local injury as by focal infections elsewhere, as in tonsils or at the roots of teeth. Or a local injury may be made worse by systemic poisoning resulting from such infections.

“Since professional athletes are human beings, not supermen, general health often plays a part in the disability and should be the first thought in the mind of the medical examiner,” advises Dr. Bennett.

Science News Letter, September 6, 1941

CHEMISTRY

Transparent Gloves Contain No Sulfur

TRANSSPARENT gloves that give complete resistance against practically all organic solvents have recently been introduced, for industrial use. The material has great mechanical strength, and contains no sulfur, so it cannot tarnish metal surfaces. (*Resistoflex Corp. Belleville, N. J.*)

Science News Letter, September 6, 1941

MEDICINE

Pitchers’ “Lame Wing” Due to Deposit on Joint

WHEN a veteran baseball pitcher (occasionally a youngster, too) suddenly develops a severe lameness in his “money arm” and is no longer able to throw his “fast one” because of the severe jab of pain he gets in his back shoulder muscles, he is likely to be suffering from the formation of a bony deposit on the bearing surface of his shoulder-joint very much like that which gives older persons arthritis, states Dr. George E. Bennett, member of the Johns Hopkins medical faculty. (*Journal, American Medical Association, Aug. 16*)

Part of the pain is felt in the shoulder

itself, and part is “referred” to the deltoid muscle, which is the broad, triangular muscle spreading out from the shoulder across the upper part of the back. This referred pain is due to the pressure of the bone accretion on a nerve, Dr. Bennett explains. It is possible to remove this bony growth by surgical operation, but this involves cutting loose part of the deltoid muscle, and is at best a risky procedure.

“My experience,” Dr. Bennett states, “is not sufficient to advocate this operative procedure with the assurance that a baseball pitcher will be able to

Let us do it

When you want a book on science, save yourself the trouble of shopping. Let us get it for you. We will gladly obtain any American book or magazine in print and pay postage in the United States. Just send your check or money order to cover retail price (\$5 if price is unknown, change to be returned to you). When publications are free, send 10c for handling. Address:

Book Department

SCIENCE NEWS LETTER

1719 N St., N. W. Washington, D. C.