

MEDICINE

Conquest of Liver Cirrhosis By Diet Now Seems Likely

Casein, Principal Milk Protein, and One Member Of Vitamin B Group Help Hitherto Hopeless Malady

CHEESE and a vitamin may be the future cure for cirrhosis of the liver, fatal condition once known as "drunkard's liver."

Success in both treating and preventing the condition with a B vitamin and casein, chief protein of milk and cheese, is announced by Dr. J. V. Lowry, Dr. Floyd S. Daft, Dr. W. H. Sebrell, Dr. L. L. Ashburn and Dr. R. D. Lillie, of the U. S. Public Health Service.

Laboratory rats were the patients in this work, but the report comes hard on the heels of a report from two New York doctors that human liver cirrhosis patients were successfully treated by "a highly nutritious diet supplemented with vitamin B concentrates."

Taken together, the reports suggest that the day is fast approaching when a diagnosis of cirrhosis of the liver will no longer be equivalent to a death warrant, especially since the New York doctors happened to have given their patients a diet which seems to have included the two substances that helped the rats.

Choline and casein are the two diet constituents successfully used by the Public Health Service scientists to treat and prevent liver cirrhosis in their rats. They had previously discovered they could produce the condition by keeping the rats on a diet lacking in these substances, whether or not they got alcohol with the diet.

Choline is believed to be one of the B vitamins. It is always found with these vitamins in foods and is in most vitamin B concentrates.

The New York scientists, Dr. Arthur J. Patek, Jr., and Dr. Joseph Post, started their diet treatment of human liver cirrhosis patients in 1939, more than two years before this report. They based the treatment on their observation that, in addition to signs of liver failure, the patients were malnourished and particularly lacked the B vitamins.

Almost half of these patients, 45%, were alive at the end of the second year,

they now report (*Journal of Clinical Investigation*, September).

This is more than twice the percentage of cirrhosis patients who lived two years without the diet treatment. Both treated and untreated patients had reached the stage in cirrhosis where ascites, or fluid in the abdomen, had developed. In the diet-treated patients this and other symptoms including jaundice disappeared and 20 of the 54 were well enough to resume fully their previous activities.

These patients probably got both choline, from the vitamin B concentrates, and casein, from milk or cheese which would undoubtedly be included in a "highly nutritious diet."

Proof that these two diet constituents

can relieve liver cirrhosis in human patients, however, depends on the trial of these specific substances which the Public Health Service scientists say should be made.

In the rats, the treatment helps the animals to recover by enabling the liver to regenerate or grow enough new cells to function normally and enable the animals to live. The part of the liver that has been destroyed by the disease is not affected by the treatment.

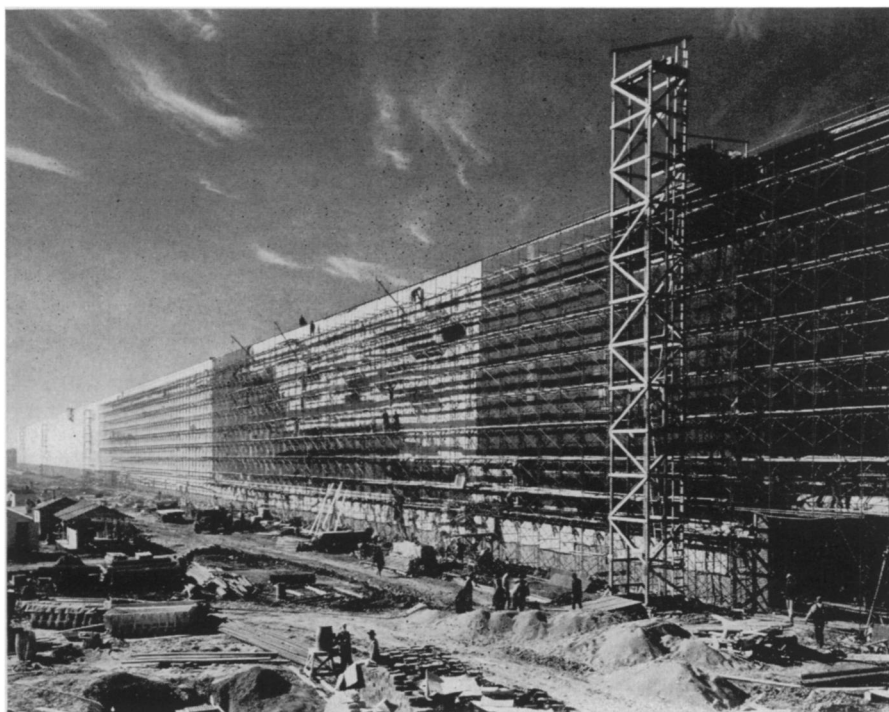
Science News Letter, December 6, 1941

MEDICINE

Vitamins Help Doctors Treat Rare Disease

SUCCESSFUL treatment of Raynaud's disease, characterized by spasms of the feet and hands, with the vitamin B group is reported by Dr. Rose Spiegel, Mt. Sinai Hospital, New York, in the hospital's journal (Nov.-Dec.).

The disease is most common among women and attacks are usually brought on by chilling of the hands and feet. Occasionally it is associated with thickening patches of skin on the fingers and toes. (*Turn to next page*)



ASSEMBLY PLANT

Fiberglass and steel are being used together in the walls of this huge aircraft assembly plant at Fort Worth to carry out plans of Army engineers to insure working comfort and operating efficiency in the 2,000,000 square feet of floor space within the air-conditioned, windowless layout. Consolidated Aircraft Corporation will run the plant.