

MEDICINE

Drugs Lower Cholesterol

► THE COMBINED ACTION of another drug with MER-29 gives excellent results in lowering cholesterol when patients with hardening of the arteries do not respond to MER-29 alone.

MER-29 (tripranol) was released for prescription use just before the American Medical Association meeting in 1960. Now the 1961 AMA meeting in New York has been told that MER-29 is usually effective but that the combined, or synergistic, action of a second drug may be even better.

Dr. William Hollander of Massachusetts Memorial Hospitals, Boston, reported that he and his colleagues had treated 85% of more than 100 patients successfully with MER-29 alone.

"However," Dr. Hollander said, "three-fourths of the patients would do better with the combined action of another drug. The drugs we use are Nicalex (aluminum nicotinate), which is available through prescription, or D-thyroxine, which is not on the market.

"D-thyroxine, which is a thyroid-like compound, should be given in small doses if pain is present in cases of arteriosclerosis, although if no pain is present, larger doses will do more good." This is because D-thyroxine aggravates the pain.

Asked if he believes high cholesterol levels are responsible for arteriosclerosis (hardening of the arteries), Dr. Hollander told SCIENCE SERVICE that "there is a large body of clinical evidence for an important relationship between cholesterol metabolism and arteriosclerotic heart disease."

Working with Dr. Hollander on the research he reported were Drs. A. V. Chobanian and Robert W. Wilkins, also of Massachusetts Memorial Hospitals.

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Protect From Quacks

► PHYSICIANS at the American Medical Association meeting in New York were told they should protect society from the "buffoonery of the food quacks" by Dr. Fredrick J. Stare of Harvard Medical School.

Dr. Stare challenged the medical profession to learn more about modern nutrition as probably the "most important single environmental factor affecting health."

People should cut down on their caloric intake without cutting out all fat, Dr. Stare said. Sensible eating and moderate exercise would probably reduce the high rate of heart disease among normally healthy persons.

For those with high cholesterol levels, the professor of nutrition advised gradually reduced fat intake. But he said he had no proof that this would eliminate heart attacks.

Modern nutrition can help in the control of a variety of diseases from diabetes to kidney stones, Dr. Stare said.

"For the first time research holds out hope of lessening the formation of calcium

oxalate stones in the kidney and bladder," he told the physicians. These stones can be produced experimentally in nearly 100% of test animals by diets low in pyridoxine and magnesium, and prevented by increasing the dietary level of these two nutrients, he explained.

Adequate calories can now be given to acutely ill patients through development of a fat emulsion that can safely be given in the veins, Dr. Stare said.

"Vitamins can readily be added to such an emulsion, and when one can add a protein digest or amino acids and minerals one should have convenient and effective complete parenteral nutrition."

Dr. Stare assailed "self-righteous pseudo-scientists" who are preventing water fluoridation in the face of overwhelming scientific evidence that it reduces tooth decay.

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Medicine in Space

► "HARDWARE TECHNOLOGY" is passing medicine in the race for space, Brig. Gen. J. W. Humphreys Jr. of Lackland Air Force Base, Texas, told the American Medical Association meeting in New York.

"During the initial stages of our conquest of space," Gen. Humphreys said, "adequate medical support will probably exceed the capabilities of any one of our present military medical departments and it is probable that a combined biomedical space support task group will be required."

Gen. Humphreys said his viewpoint did not necessarily coincide with that of the Air Force, but that he believed a single agency would be necessary. A full-time medical support task group composed of selected members from all agencies involved would also be needed.

Referring to the flight of Cmdr. Alan B. Shepard Jr. into space, Gen. Humphreys said in the coming months a man will take the much longer step into orbital flight. From then on, in the foreseeable future, space craft will be orbiting the earth.

The general warned that adequate medical support would be costly in money, material, and skilled medical and allied science manpower. Today's medical recovery operations are archaic, he pointed out. In the future they must be replaced with locations on space stations manned by a "well-founded generalist" (not a specialist) and considered a satellite of the main ground base.

The health of crewmen was emphasized by Gen. Humphreys, who said that "physicians must be responsible for not only the general physical well-being of the space crewman, but also be sure that he is not in the incubation phase of a disease.

On a trip to a far target such as the moon, requiring six to nine days, or to Mars, taking seven to nine months, Gen. Humphreys said, a chronic condition such as peptic ulcer or ileitis could cause serious trouble.

Brig. Gen. Don Flickinger, M.D., of An-

draws Air Force Base, Washington, D. C., said Cmdr. Shepard's achievement "used up a generation of knowledge." More technology must be developed before moon flight is possible.

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Value of Drugs

► DOCTORS WANT doctors, not the Food and Drug Administration, to decide the value of prescription drugs.

At the American Medical Association meeting in New York, the policy-making House of Delegates voted that only a physician can tell how effective a given drug will be for the individual patient.

Sen. Estes Kefauver (D-Tenn.) has proposed legislation authorizing the Food and Drug Administration to determine the value of prescription drugs as medicine. AMA spokesmen appeared before the committee.

The House of Delegates also voted to oppose the King-Anderson bill and any other legislation of this type that would use the Social Security system to provide medical care for the aged. It said that the medical profession would "see to it" that every person received the best available medical care, regardless of ability to pay.

Among the 102 resolutions presented to the House of Delegates were those recommending that the relationship of osteopaths and physicians be left to individual states, that optometrists confine their activities to refraction of the eyes only, that the medical profession discipline its own members when necessary, and that the Government appropriate funds for building fallout shelters.

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Winners at AMA Meeting

► TWO SCIENCE-MINDED youngsters who won top honors from the American Medical Association at this year's National Science Fair-International exhibited their research projects at the annual AMA meeting in New York.

Rita C. Manak, 16, a senior at Lourdes Academy in Cleveland, Ohio, won her New York trip for research on the biochemical aspects of leukemia. Christopher G. Cherniak, 16, Eau Gallie, Fla., a junior at Melbourne High School, Melbourne, was cited for keeping nerve fibers functioning after removal from an animal's body.

Earlier, they were winners at preliminary fairs in their home states. Rita also won a Westinghouse Science Award in the 1961 Science Talent Search.

At the national fair in Kansas City, young Cherniak became the top all-time winner, taking first-place special awards from the AMA, the Army, the Navy and the Air Force, as well as placing second in general judging in the biological sciences.

AMA participation in the annual National Science Fair-International, conducted by SCIENCE SERVICE, Washington, D. C., is part of the organization's program to interest talented high school and college students in medical careers.

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