

SURGERY

Russian Surgical Stapler

Russian scientists are touring the United States to show the advantages of staplers over conventional methods of suturing wounds, Faye Marley reports.

► RUSSIAN SCIENTISTS are touring the United States to show through operations on dogs how a new Russian-made mechanical stapler can close surgical wounds.

Already Dr. Sarkis Mushegian has performed operations before surgeons in New York, Baltimore, Washington and Philadelphia, and with Nicolai Gorkin, a scientist engineer, and Prof. Mikhail G. Ananyev, director of the Russian Institute of Experimental Medicine in Moscow, will travel from Miami to San Francisco demonstrating the advantages of the staplers over conventional methods of suturing wounds.

Dr. Mark M. Ravitch of Johns Hopkins University introduced the staplers into U. S. surgical practice after a visit to Leningrad in 1958. There he purchased a bronchus stapler for \$440 (equivalent in rubles) and has used it successfully on 100 patients at the Baltimore City Hospital.

"Surgeons should face the fact that we are going to have mechanical devices that will replace traditional handicraft such as hand suturing," Dr. Ravitch told SCIENCE SERVICE. "This does not mean that suturing will be totally replaced, however. Mechanical staplers so far have not been able to get into corners, but they do a more perfect job of vascular suturing than anyone can do by hand."

Dr. Brian Blades, chief of surgery at George Washington University Hospital, agrees with Dr. Ravitch to some extent. He said he would like to buy some of the 20 types of staplers, but he would want to

experiment with them before he put them into clinical use. A metal skin clip has been used for years, but the Russian stapler is an expert instrument, he said.

So far the only importer for the Russian-made staplers is the Cosmos Development Corporation, 45 West 45th St., New York. But a 55% duty will increase the price to something like \$1,350 or more for multi-purpose apparatus.

The V. Mueller Instrument Manufacturing Co., 320 S. Honore St., Chicago, is negotiating with the Cosmos Corporation to be the sole distributors of the staplers in the U.S.

MEDICINE

Air Patient Number 500,000

► THE PATIENT number 500,000 to be landed by domestic aeromedical evacuation, popularly known as Air Evac, was Marine Corp. Michael T. Lingle of Larksville, Pa., flown from Camp Lejeune, N. C., to Andrews Air Force Base, near Washington.

Maj. Gen. O. K. Niess, surgeon general of the U. S. Air Force, met his plane and presented him with a model of the aircraft, a C-131 nicknamed "Samaritan."

Corp. Lingle, who is suffering from ankylosis, a joint ailment, was sent on to the Veterans Administration Hospital at Wilkes-Barre, Pa., near his home.

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William Merz, vice president of the Mueller Company, said that the Russian scientists were planning to demonstrate the stapler at Northwestern University, Evanston, and at a Chicago press conference later.

Among places to be visited by the Russians are the Santa Barbara, Calif., Medical Center, the University of Colorado Medical Center, Denver, the Mayo Clinic, Rochester, Minn., and a number of individual surgeons in various cities.

Boston, Miami, New York, San Francisco, El Paso and Houston, Texas, Tryon and Winston-Salem, N.C., and St. Louis, Mo., are also on the itinerary.

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MEDICINE

Artificial Hip Joints Used After Fractures

► HOPE FOR the elderly who break a hip is offered through use of artificial hip joints.

Of 102 patients, 82% showed excellent or good results when the hip joints were inserted after fractures, Drs. J. George Furey, George E. Spencer Jr. and Donald J. Pierce of Western Reserve School of Medicine, Cleveland, report in the Journal of the American Medical Association, 177:100, 1961.

The average age of the patients was 74, but the surgeons state the operation is not unduly dangerous. They recommend the artificial hip joints also for younger patients with severe mental or physical disabilities.

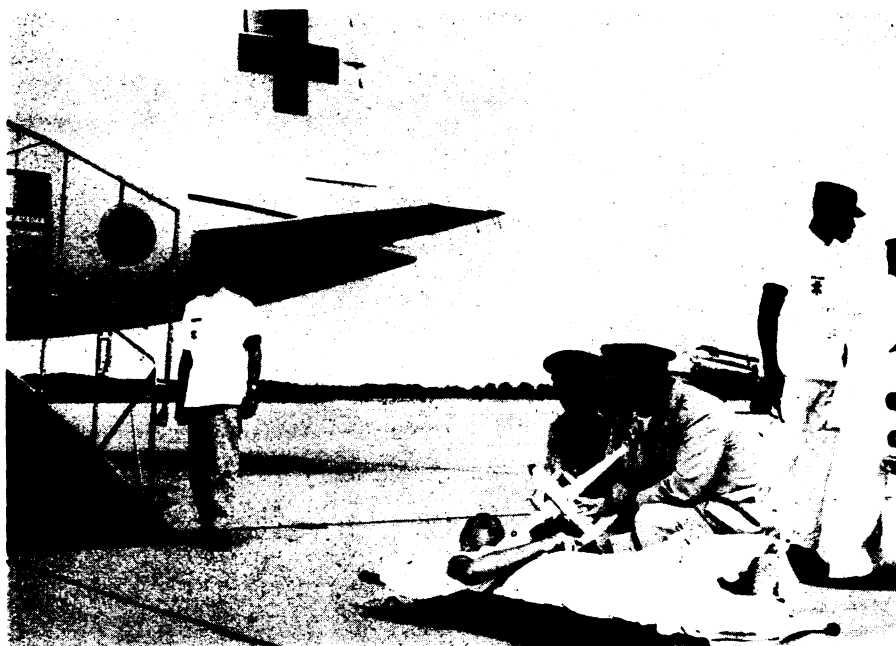
The operation allows weight-bearing on the hip in two to three weeks, whereas other surgical procedures in which the hip is set and allowed to heal require avoiding weight-bearing for six months.

Physicians also read in their official journal that bacteria have been identified as a cause of "athlete's foot" when it affects the toes. The disease, called erythrasma, had previously been classified among those caused by fungus.—Drs. Imrich Sarkany, on leave of absence from the Royal Free Hospital, London; David Taplin and Harvey Blank, all working at the University of Miami School of Medicine (p. 130).

A contraceptive foam that withstands long storage in moist climates without deterioration is reported accepted by 69% of 222 low-income families in a field trial in Puerto Rico. Monthly reports indicate that 22,000 persons in Puerto Rico are using the recently available spermicidal material.—Dr. Manuel E. Paniagua of Rio Piedras, P.R., Dr. Clarence J. Gamble and Henry W. Vaillant of the Population Studies Unit, Harvard School of Public Health (p. 125).

A penicillin-resistant infection resembling gonorrhea was found to be caused by organisms of the tribe Mimeoae. Alarming reports from U.S. Navy units in the Mediterranean indicated a penicillin-resistant gonorrhea but laboratory tests discounted the reports. *Neisseria gonorrhoeae* is not resistant to penicillin.—Dr. Richard H. Svihus, Enrique M. Lucero, Ronald J. Mikolajczyk and Edward E. Carter, U.S. Navy Preventive Medicine Unit No. 7, c/o FPO, New York (p. 121).

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AIR PATIENT NUMBER 500,000 ARRIVING.