

PSYCHOLOGY

Broken Homes Cycle

► PARENTS from broken homes tend to have children who produce broken homes when they become parents, thus creating a vicious cycle, an English psychiatrist has found.

He studied 185 children from four to 15 years old in a London County Council child guidance unit (Brixton). In only 41 cases did the child and both parents come from an unbroken home. Previous studies have demonstrated that delinquent children come from broken homes, but the parents' own home background has not been investigated.

Dr. C. J. Wardle, now consultant in child psychiatry for North Lincolnshire, made his one-year investigation while he was at Bethlem Royal and Maudsley Hospitals near London.

Dr. Wardle's study showed "significant differences" in symptoms between children with one parent who had suffered a broken home in childhood and those with both parents apparently from intact homes.

Where parents had unbroken childhood homes, only 24% of the children showed

disorderly conduct (defined as delinquent, antisocial or aggressive). But 68% behaved neurotically, that is, they showed anxiety, depression, timidity, obsessional features, shyness or inhibition.

In contrast, where at least one parent had suffered a broken home in childhood, 52% of their children showed disordered conduct and only 34% presented neurotic behavior.

Dr. Wardle suggests that a register of all children from broken homes be compiled and that such children be supervised and followed into adult life. By understanding treatment these children can achieve socially and mentally healthy lives, he reports in the *British Medical Journal*, Aug. 5, 1961.

Information is needed, the psychiatrist states, about the proportion of children from broken homes who develop normally. Foster homes and children's homes in this way could be helped to copy the rearing pattern.

• *Science News Letter*, 80:116 August 19, 1961

MEDICINE

Fatal Heart Cases Up

► THE ANNUAL number of deaths from heart disease, the nation's number one killer, increased by 23,785 in the two-year period from 1957 to 1959, the National Health Education Committee reported in New York.

Diseases of the heart and circulatory system caused 915,610 deaths in 1959, compared with 891,825 from the same causes in 1957.

The 1959 heart fatality total included 511,640 from arteriosclerosis alone, 247,530 from cardiovascular conditions involving both arteriosclerosis and hypertension, and 80,800 from hypertension. These three causes accounted for 92% of the heart-linked deaths.

The 915,610 deaths made up 55% of the 1,659,000 deaths in the United States from all causes in 1959. An additional 11,917,000 persons were disabled in varying degrees by diseases of the heart and circulation, making these afflictions second only to mental and emotional disorders, with 17,000,000 reported, as a leading cause of disability.

Cancer, the second ranking killer, also increased its toll slightly, from 253,183 deaths in 1957 to 259,090 deaths in 1959. Cancer accounted for 16% of the overall total.

Other major death causes included accidents, five percent; diseases of early infancy, four percent; influenza and pneumonia, three percent; diabetes mellitus, two percent; congenital malformations, one percent; cirrhosis of the liver, one percent; suicides, one percent; and tuberculosis, seven-tenths of one percent.

Despite the deaths and illnesses, the American life span reached 69.7 years in 1959, an increase of six and four-tenths years since 1943. White females are living six and one-half years longer than white males, and non-white females four and nine-tenths years longer than non-white males.

The national death rate declined 17% from 1937 through 1959, and 11% from 1945 through 1959—an estimated saving of 4,494,736 lives that would have been lost had the 1937 death rate prevailed for the 22 years following.

Mrs. Albert D. Lasker, committee chairman, points out that only seven-tenths of one percent of the Government's annual expenditures goes for medical research. Appropriations to the National Institutes of Health for fiscal 1961 were \$560,000,000, compared to the total U. S. Budget of \$79 billion.

The committee's biannual report, "Facts on the Major Killing and Crippling Diseases in the United States Today," is available at \$5.25 a copy from the National Health Education Committee, 135 E. 42nd St., New York 17, N. Y.

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MEDICINE

Lincoln's Smallpox Scare Kept Visitors Away

► PRESIDENT Abraham Lincoln was in the incubation stage of smallpox when he delivered the Gettysburg address, but his attack later was mild.

This little known bit of Lincolnia was

uncovered by Charles Roos of the National Library of Medicine, Washington, D.C., during research on U.S. presidents' health.

"When unwelcome visitors came to the White House for a long time afterward, Lincoln would scare them away with his smallpox although it had long since passed the danger of infection to others," Mr. Roos told *SCIENCE SERVICE*.

The *Journal of the American Medical Association*, published in Chicago, carries a lead editorial on the health of the presidents, 177:324, 1961.

The swampy ground around the White House was a breeding ground for the *Anopheles* mosquito, which causes malaria, and this disease as well as "dysentery" afflicted most of the early presidents.

• *Science News Letter*, 80:116 August 19, 1961

SCIENCE NEWS LETTER

VOL. 80 AUGUST 19, 1961 NO. 8

Edited by WATSON DAVIS

The Weekly Summary of Current Science, published every Saturday by *SCIENCE SERVICE, Inc.*, 1719 N St., N.W., Washington 6, D. C., North 7-2255. Cable Address: SCIENSERV.

Subscription rates: 1 yr., \$5.50; 2 yrs., \$10.00; 3 yrs., \$14.50; ten or more copies in one package to one address, 7½ cents per copy per week; single copy, 15 cents, more than six months old, 25 cents. No charge for foreign postage.

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Printed in U.S.A. Second class postage paid at Washington, D. C. Established in mimeograph form March 13, 1922. Title registered as trademark, U. S. and Canadian Patent Offices. Indexed in Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature, Abridged Guide, and the Engineering Index. Member of Audit Bureau of Circulation.



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