

## New Drug for Leukemia

West Berlin researchers reported use of a new drug, also used at the National Institutes of Health, Bethesda, Md., and in Hungary for treatment of humans suffering from leukemia. The drug is vincalukoblastine, an alkaloid obtained from an extract of *vinca rosea* linn.

## Antitumor Power

Dr. E. M. Vermel of the Institute of Medicinal Plants, Moscow, told about 500 plant species that had been studied with the result that some of them are believed to possess antitumor power.

The theory of the treatment is that tumor growth is related to food, which for animals consists primarily of plant products. Growth-stimulating substances called auxins, as well as substances that retard growth (anti-auxins), play an important part in the life of plants.

## Cancer Control Discussed

Cancer control was discussed by Dr. Murray Copeland of the University of Texas M. D. Anderson Hospital and Tumor Institute, Houston, who told of the need for a uniform standard of cancer appraisal. Dr. M. V. Danilenko and his co-workers in Vinnitsa, USSR, said seminars to increase the knowledge of all medical staff concerning cancer are attended by 250 doctors and 1,000 workers with secondary medical education annually. One of the leading aims in the USSR is to achieve annual surveys and check-ups for cancer.

New treatment for cancer and long-term results of treatment by surgery, radiation and drugs showed improved survival rates almost universally. Occupational cancers and other environmental causes were discussed, and Dr. W. C. Hueper of the National Cancer Institute, Bethesda, Md., recommended an international clearing-house within the framework of the World Health Organization.

The International Union Against Cancer, which sponsors the cancer congresses, is composed of 87 organizations in 62 countries and collaborates with the World Health Organization. It is non-governmental but receives its largest support from the National Institutes of Health of the United States.

The new president inaugurated at the close of the conference is Dr. Alexander Haddow of the Chester Beatty Institute for Cancer Research, London, England.

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## AUTOMATION

### Electronic Automation For Cancer Drug Tested

► ELECTRONIC automation is increasing the accuracy and speed of analyzing cancer-combating drugs at the University of Colorado, Boulder. Crystal analysis diffraction equipment is hitched to punched tape that can be fed into a computer for processing.

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## MEDICINE

### Older Persons Suffer More From Heart Disease

► MORE older men and women are hospitalized for heart disease than for any other nonsurgical condition, the statisticians of Metropolitan Life Insurance Company report.

A study of the company's retired personnel shows also that the hospital admission rate for heart disease rises with advance in age. In 1959-60, the rate for retired men increased from 18 per 1,000 under age 65 to 36 per 1,000 at ages 75 and over. The relative frequency of the disease was considerably greater for the men than for the retired women at every age group. Coronary artery disease accounted for about half of all the heart disease cases among both men and women.

Diseases of the digestive system ranked second as a cause of hospitalization for nonsurgical conditions among the retired personnel in both sexes. Other relatively common illnesses were respiratory diseases and cerebral hemorrhage.

Mental disease accounted for a very small proportion of the cases in this experience but was responsible for long periods of hospitalization. Among the retired men, for example, the average hospital stay for psychoneuroses and psychoses increased from 40 days per case at ages 65-74 to 130 days at ages 75 and over.

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## MEDICINE

### More Premature Births Among Smoking Mothers

► PREMATURE BIRTHS—an important cause of brain damage and death—occur more frequently among mothers who smoke than among non-smokers, a study by the Public Health Service has confirmed.

Birth weight is reduced with increased smoking, the nationwide study of 23,000 expectant mothers and their babies showed.

The study also showed that prematurity, stillbirths and brain damage are linked with some previously unsuspected events of pregnancy, such as Asian flu and vaginal infection. More than 40% of a group of study infants diagnosed as abnormal at the eight-month psychological examination had suffered breathing difficulties at or soon after birth.

When a mother has Asian flu early in pregnancy, the infection may affect the unborn child. No flu symptoms were present in 40% of the cases and diagnosis could be made by blood test only.

High rates of prematurity and infant death were found to be associated with diagnosis suggesting inflammation of the placenta, fetal membranes, and umbilical cord.

The findings are the first results of a long-range project, according to Dr. Richard L. Masland, director of the National Institute of Neurological Diseases and Blindness.

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## Do You Know?

Current findings tend to challenge a long held assumption that there are basic and absolute differences in the vital *chemistry* of normal and tumor cells.

*Trachoma* is one of the most widespread infections in the world today affecting an estimated 15% of the population of the earth, and is a major cause of blindness in Asia, the Middle East and Africa.

Euclid's "*Elements*," written in 300 B.C., was used as a textbook in essentially its original form until about 75 or 100 years ago.

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