

PUBLIC HEALTH

'Cold Turkey' Inhumane

The practice of abruptly withdrawing addicts from narcotics, known as the "cold turkey" treatment, is both cruel and dangerous, a Government report says—By Faye Marley

► THE CRUELTY of the "cold turkey" method was deplored as a treatment for narcotic addicts in the report of the Presidents' Advisory Commission on Narcotic and Drug Abuse.

"Abrupt withdrawal, the so-called 'cold turkey' treatment, is very painful and can be dangerous," the Commission stated in the 123-page final report.

Following the statement of the American Medical Association and the National Academy of Sciences-National Research Council on gradual reduction of dosage, the Commission said that in both barbiturate and opiate "detoxification" abrupt withdrawal has sometimes been fatal.

The experience of Great Britain with its addicts, however, has been mistakenly cited, the Commission believes, to support the feasibility of "maintaining" the U.S. addict.

Under the British system, a physician may prescribe narcotics regularly in minimum doses when the addicted persons needs them in order to lead a useful life.

The point of dissimilarity between the British system and the American practice lies in the authority taken by the individual British physician to treat the addict as he deems best in his medical judgment.

Many British patients classified as "medical addicts" are those for whom an addict-

ing type of drug was initially prescribed in the course of treatment for a physical or mental illness. Although this type of British addict cannot stop taking narcotics, he seems to have enough motivation to pursue an ordinary life.

Only 532 known addicts were reported to the United Nations by the United Kingdom in 1962. In New York alone there are estimated to be as many as 50,000 narcotic addicts. The American addict has little motivation, and his vocational and economic handicaps limit his ability to lead a normal life, the Commission says.

The most controversial subject with which the AMA-Research Council joint statement deals is the often-heard proposal that physicians be permitted to maintain addicts on drugs so legal channels could provide them at relatively low prices.

Those arguing for this idea point out that addicts would then not have to turn to illicit sources and that without buyers these sources would dry up. Also, addicts would not turn to crime to support their expensive habit.

However, the joint statement says that on the basis of present knowledge the continuous administration of maintenance doses to addicts as treatment is medically unsound. Further research is needed to find

out what is the best medical practice.

Here are some of the numerous recommendations made on the legal aspects of the narcotic and drug abuse problem in this country:

The Mexican Government should be invited to assist in the establishment of a Joint United States-Mexico Commission for consultation on the development of better methods to curb the illegal flow of narcotics, marijuana and dangerous drugs between Mexico and the U.S.

The United Nations should establish a system of international control of the distribution of dangerous drugs.

World opium cultivation and production limitations should be controlled.

Chairman of the President's Advisory Commission was retired Judge E. Barrett Prettyman of the U.S. Court of Appeals, Washington, D. C.

Copies of the report may be obtained for 55¢ from the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D. C. 20402.

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GENERAL SCIENCE

Science All Stars Features Fair Winners

► NATIONAL Science Fair-International finalists will be featured on viewings of the ABC-TV series, Science, All Stars, directed by Steve Carlin, in which SCIENCE SERVICE cooperates.

On Sunday, Feb. 16, featured participants will be Ladye Montgomery, 17, of Greenwood, Miss., Greg Mueller, 16, of South Bend, Ind., and Daniel Jacobsmeier, of St. Louis, Mo., Ladye will use a mercury capsule to demonstrate gyroscopic principles of space flight and Greg will show his heart-lung machine duplicating features of professional equipment used in open-heart surgery. Daniel will demonstrate a remote electrocardiograph that makes it possible to obtain blood pressure readings from a patient's index finger. Daniel won awards at the NSF-I from the National Telemetering Conference and the U. S. Army.

Guest scientists will be Dr. Irvine H. Page, noted heart specialist and Dr. George Mueller, who is in charge of manned space flights for the National Aeronautics and Space Administration.

The following Sunday afternoon, Feb. 23, the show will center around Jeanette Kuhn, 15, of Dallas, Texas, and Ken Ritthaler, 16, of Upton, Wyo. Jeanette will give details of crystal growing and explain their use in radio, ultrasonics, lasers and electronics. Ken will explain differences between coherent and incoherent light, demonstrating the power of coherent light with his own laser. Incoherent light will be demonstrated by Doug Schoen, 10, of New York with his pinhole, cereal box camera.

Guest scientist Major Gen. Frank Britton, U. S. Army, will tell of the range-finding uses of lasers.

Future shows are being planned around other top young scientists. The principal time of the program is 4:30 p.m. EST with a few stations scheduling them at other times.

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More Tobacco Research

► FURTHER RESEARCH on the relationship of smoking and health is fine, but it must not be an excuse for "delaying action" in educating the public on dangers of cigarette smoking, Dr. James M. Hundley, assistant Surgeon General of the U.S. Public Health Service, told SCIENCE SERVICE in Washington.

Dr. Hundley's statement followed hearings of a House Agriculture subcommittee on a joint resolution authorizing the Agriculture Secretary to establish a laboratory in the flue-cured tobacco area for research into plant breeding that could eliminate health hazards.

Rep. Harold D. Cooley (D-N.C.), who introduced the first of three Senate and House joint resolutions Jan. 13, called for such sums as the Congress "may from time to time determine to be necessary" but he said he has in mind something like \$5 million.

The Department of Agriculture already has begun research on tobacco ingredients, Dr. Nyle C. Brady, Agriculture's director of science and education, testified at the hearings.

Research conducted by department chemists at the Eastern Utilization Research and

Development Laboratory at Philadelphia eventually could determine the dozens of organic compounds in tobacco leaf and in tobacco smoke, Dr. Brady said.

"Studies on the composition of tobacco were augmented by an additional \$200,000 in the appropriation bill just passed by Congress," he said. These funds will finance studies of the constituents of the resins in tobacco leaf and the effect of these ingredients on the burning of the leaf.

The laboratory suggested by the joint resolution to conduct investigations on tobacco and tobacco products would greatly benefit the Agriculture Department's research program, Dr. Brady said.

Gov. Terry Sanford of North Carolina and Gov. Edward T. Breathitt Jr. of Kentucky, both testified that although the tobacco industry in their state is crucial to their economy, they are deeply concerned in protecting the health of smokers.

A crash program of research in Lexington, Ky., was proposed by Gov. Breathitt, who described the research work being done there by the University of Kentucky Medical Center and the Agricultural Experiment Station nearby.

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