

MEDICINE

Drug Ignorance Hit

The American Medical Association charged doctors with prescribing drugs which might produce harmful effects on patients, even sudden death—By Faye Marley

► APPALLING IGNORANCE of the use of drugs was charged to physicians by two speakers, one from New York, the other from California.

The tranquilizer drugs called phenothiazines can cause sudden death without warning after long use, Dr. Leo E. Hollister of the Veterans Administration Hospital, Palo Alto, Calif., told the 114th annual convention of the American Medical Association.

Newer complications of phenothiazines include deep pigmentation of exposed skin which sometimes acquires a purplish hue when treatment has been prolonged, Dr. Hollister explained. Deposits in lungs, heart and kidneys have caused sudden deaths among psychiatric patients, although it is too early to state the exact relationship of the pigment to heart failure.

Dr. George A. Perera, associate dean and professor of medicine, Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons, said a doctor who prescribes drugs must be a "conscientious watchdog, familiar with the signs, symptoms and patterns which will alert him, preferably beforehand, to the complications and even dangers produced by his good intentions."

Diuretics, which increase the kidney output and antihypertensives, aimed at lower-

ing blood pressure, have beneficial actions but they accomplish their results by hurting rather than helping, frequently at sites damaged already by the disease under treatment, Dr. Perera warned.

Most drugs used to reduce high blood pressure are aimed at parts of the nervous system in order to produce dilation of the arteries, but in doing this, they "often reduce the output of the heart already working under stress" or one laboring against hardening of the arteries. These drugs may harm the brain, kidneys or other organs when used to treat the elderly or very ill patients especially.

A third speaker, Dr. John Adriani of New Orleans, warned against the dangers of local anesthetics. Not only may the patient be allergic to the drugs used, rapid absorption can cause convulsions followed by breathing paralysis.

Ways to meet the dangers of drugs, which cause adverse reactions in at least 10% of patients, include the careful preliminary study required by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, Dr. Joseph Sadusk, medical director of the FDA, pointed out. The benefit of the drug must be weighed against its "calculated risk."

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Bone Atrophy Retarded

► THE VALUE of female hormones, or estrogens, extends far beyond the menopause period, when most physicians prescribe them.

Millions of women could avoid hardening of the arteries and the bone atrophy called osteoporosis if they would continue to use estrogens throughout their postmenopausal life, a University of Chicago doctor believes.

Dr. M. Edward Davis told doctors at the 114th annual American Medical Association convention that their current practice in relieving menopause symptoms during the short period of their existence is archaic.

Twenty-five years of experience in long-term followup of more than 400 women who have been receiving estrogen replacement have led Dr. Davis to the conviction that hormones should be used as preventive medicine and become "an integral part of our daily practice."

For the past two years, Drs. Nels M. Strandjord and Lawrence H. Lanzl of the University's department of radiology, who developed a machine for the accurate determination of bone density, have studied the same group of 400 women, helping to prove that estrogens prevent or retard postmenopausal bone atrophy.

Dr. Davis's patients include women who have had ovaries removed along with removal of the womb, or hysterectomy, as well as those who have had a natural menopause.

Other speakers reported success in bringing about ovulation in women unable to have children.

In a scientific exhibit, Dr. Edward T. Tyler of Los Angeles, Calif., demonstrated the use of pergonal, which is derived from fractionated menopause urine. In approximately 250 infertile women, he said a substantial percentage began ovulating when pergonal was followed by clomiphene, or a similar substance.

Dr. Robert W. Kistner of the Harvard Medical School, Boston, reported ovulation of 70% in patients treated with clomiphene citrate.

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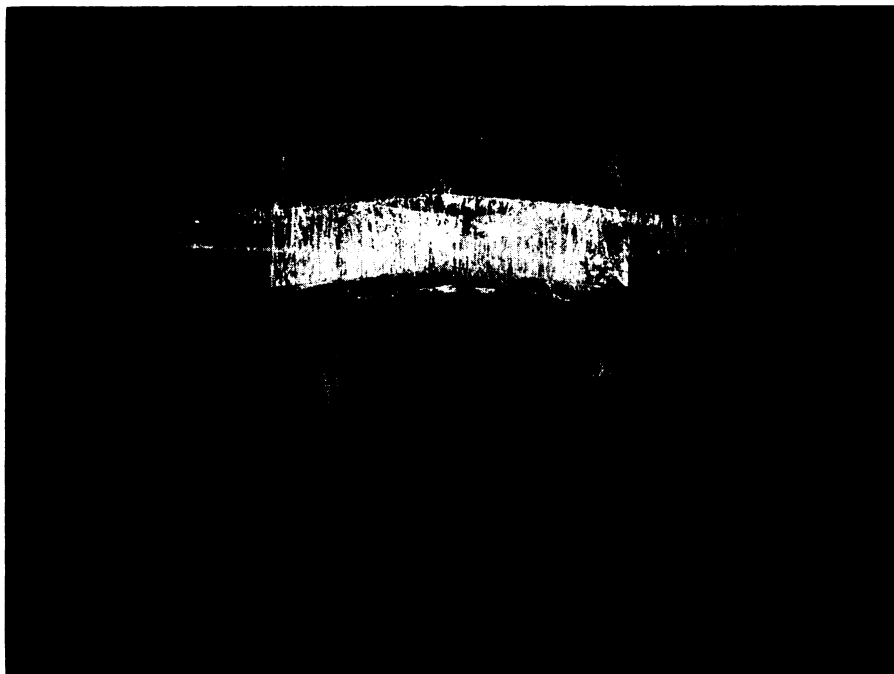
NSF-I Winners Honored

► A VAST MEDICAL "FAIR" with more than 350 scientific exhibits greeted the 25,000 physicians from all over the country who attended the 114th annual convention of the American Medical Association.

Among the guests of honor at the convention were the two student winners of the AMA top awards at the National Science Fair-International sponsored by SCIENCE SERVICE in May in St. Louis, Mo.

They were Johnna Lou Russell, 16, of Albuquerque, N. Mex., and Ronald Gene Owens, 16, of Sylacauga, Ala. Miss Russell showed her exhibit on "DNA Isolation and Transformation in Staphylococcus Aureus." Ronald demonstrated his work on the mental and physical effects of acceleration on mice.

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Goodyear Aerospace Corporation

HIGH ALTITUDE DECELERATION DEVICE—A technician at Goodyear Aerospace Corporation in Akron, Ohio, inflates a balloon-parachute which will be used to decelerate and recover a rocket-powered meteorological probe, designed to measure wind direction, velocity and other data at altitudes as high as 40 miles.