

MEDICINE

Coronary Disease May Be From Early Injury

► THE CLOSING down of arteries in old age may be due more to changes within the arterial walls themselves, than to the amount of various fats and minerals circulating in the blood.

This is reported by Drs. Theodore Gillman and Michael Hathorn of the University of Natal, Durban, South Africa, in the *Journal of the Mount Sinai Hospital* (Nov-Dec).

Experimental findings with rats indicate that when coronary sclerosis, closing of the arteries that feed the heart, happens in a man 40 or 50 years old, it may be the result of an injury to the vessels that occurred years before and is only now showing up.

The aorta, the main artery from the heart, may be particularly prone to damage between the ages of 12 and 20 because it is growing rapidly to keep up with the great increase in trunk length during this growth period. During this time, something may happen to the normal metabolism that helps create the elastic membranes in the arteries and over the years scar tissue may begin to form.

The scars are similar to those found after severe skin injuries heal. The cellular changes that create them occur in the same sequence as they do in skin, but they occur much more slowly in arteries.

A single, severe artery injury to rats did not show up as true scar formation until months later, the scientists report. When the lifespan of this animal is adjusted to that of man's, one could expect a period of years to pass between the injury and the appearance of the scar tissue in humans.

Science News Letter, December 28, 1957

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