THE SCIENCE NEWS-LETTER

A Weekly Summary of Current Science

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ISSUED BY
SCIENCE SERVICE
B and 21st Streets
WASHINGTON, D. C.

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SUBSCRIPTION: $5 A YEAR, POSTPAID

Vol. VIII. No. 249 Saturday, Jan.16, 1926

NEW CAUSE OF BREAST CANCER INDICATED

Mother mice which had bred a number of litters of young which were prevented from suckling their babies developed cancer far more frequently than normal mice. This is the latest contribution to the subject of cancer, presented before the American Society of Zoologists, by Dr. Halsey J. Bagg, of the Cornell Medical College. Mice that were allowed to suckle one set of babies and were kept away from the next alternately, developed cancer after a shorter period than those kept from their babies entirely.

As a result of the experiments, Dr. Bagg is convinced that breast cancer in mice may be caused by stagnation and decomposition of the secretions in the breast during the period when the mother mice would normally give milk to their young.

Further evidence along this line was obtained by tying some of the breasts in some mice so that normal drainage of the secretion was prevented. In such cases he found that cancer tended to develop on the side that had been tied.

Dr. Adair, of Cornell, has shown that out of several hundred human cases of breast cancer a high percentage had abnormal activity of the breast glands, due to various causes. Only a small number of these cases had normal gland activity.

Whether cancer is caused by an organism or by abnormal cell growth, or whether a combination of the two is necessary, was discussed at length. Dr. James Murphy, of the Rockefeller Institute expressed the opinion that Gye and Barnard, of London, have not presented sufficient evidence that a cancer germ exists. Their success in transmitting cancer of chickens by means of a filtrate free from cells may be due to the presence of some enzyme causing abnormal growth, rather than to ultra-microscopic organism which Gye and Barnard regard as responsible for the disease. He considered the fact that cancer can be produced in mice by application of coal tar to the skin is evidence against the theory that cancer is caused by an infectant.

When the definite cause of cancer is known it will not only be valuable information for the cancer specialist, but it will help physiologists to understand normal cell growth, said Dr. Murphy.

Heredity may or may not be an important factor in cancer cases among human beings, but an experiment with laboratory mice, described by Dr. L. Strong, of Harvard University, indicates that heredity may play a part in unusual circumstances.

He followed the development of cancer in along family tree of mice, all descended from one original parent stock. After a long period of inbreeding there were two strains of mice, one of which was one hundred per cent susceptible to cancer, whereas the other was much more resistant.

This has no direct bearing on cancer in man, said Dr. Strong, because such inbreeding of cancerous persons, as it is done artificially in the laboratory, is not likely to happen among human beings.

PAINTED POTTERY THOUGHT TO BE 10,000 YEARS OLD.

Excavation of the sitos of Sumerian civilization which preceded the Babylonian point to the human occupation of the Mesopotamian valley long before the date of 4,000 B.C., assigned to the creation of the world by the marginal notes of the Bible. The magnificent palace of the Sumerians which was discovered at Kish has now been completely excavated by the joint expedition of Oxford University, England, and the Field Museum, Chicago. Beneath the original floor of bricks of the main court, which from their shape cannot date much later than 3,000 B.C. were found several feet of deposits which take back human occupation on this site for a very considerable period of time. It has been suggested by one authority that they must date at somewhere between 4,000 and 5,000 B.C. Many examples of Sumerian art of great significance for early culture were discovered and a great number of tablets of baked clay were found in a library mound. When examined we may perhaps learn to which race the Sumerian belonged - a question upon which there are at present conflicting views. According to some authorities they must have come from Central Asia. Others think from the highlands of Asia Minor or Armenia.

The work of the Kish Expedition in the coming season will be extended to Bughatait, a very ancient site sixteen miles from Kish where painted pottery of very early type, and inscribed tablets were found last year. Such pottery has been found in the lower strata of most of the oldest Sumerian sites in Mesopotamia, in the early stages of the culture of Susa excavated by the French expedition under de Morgan and by the American explorer on the neolithic site of his exploration at Anau in Turkestan, to which he assigned a date of 8000-9000 B.C. and it occurs at intervals across central Asia as far as northeastern China, where it has recently been discovered on a Neolithic site. If it were possible to determine the relative age of these different finds, it might afford a clue to the direction from which the Sumerians entered the country.

In addition the Kish Expedition will excavate the great temple of the Mother Goddess of Kish, situated near the Palace of Kish which was called Harsay Kalamma in an inscription discovered in the library mound last year. The interest of this excavation is great, especially as it will be remembered that it is probably in this temple that Sargon I (2750 B.C.) the great king who founded the kingdom of Akkad, was a ministrant to the Goddess before he became the leader of the revolutionary movement which overthrew the reigning monarch and brought Sargon himself to power.
