

## SCIENCE NEWS

*Science Service, Washington, D. C.*ADDRESS OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE  
AMERICAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION

A PLEA for the close and continued observance of the physicians' code of ethics was the burden of the address made by Dr. Malcolm L. Harris, of Chicago, upon his installation as president of the American Medical Association, at its eightieth annual session which opened at Portland, Oregon, on July 9.

Deontology, or the science of moral obligation, was the subject of Dr. Harris's address. Tracing the development of medical science and the dependence of humankind upon it, Dr. Harris pointed out the great obligation of physicians to humanity. Because medicine is a humanitarian profession, it must be guided by an ethical code in which cupidity or love of gain plays no part. This spirit lies back of the tabu against advertising by physicians, which has recently been under considerable discussion.

"It is chiefly the press that has raised its voice loudest against the principle of medical ethics that places a tabu on advertising by the physician," said Dr. Harris. "It is readily admitted that the lifting of the ban against advertising by the physician would result in a great financial gain to the press, but at the expense of demoralizing and removing the most powerful barrier that now protects the public against the quack, the charlatan and the faker. . . .

"Medical ethics has for its purpose the protection of the people and the creation of an idealism in the profession. Divested of all excess verbiage, it means that the conduct of physicians at all times shall be honest, honorable, fair and just to all concerned, the patient, the public, the profession and to one another. . . .

"I have endeavored to show not only that the knowledge given to the world by medical science has been instrumental in enabling civilization to reach its present state of development, but that also without a continuance of this knowledge civilization would crumble and the world be set back hundreds of years. The medical profession alone is in possession of this knowledge, and the qualified physician alone is competent to care for the sick. The practice of medicine, therefore, is a natural monopoly in the hands of the profession. Every monopoly, whether it be a natural or an artificial one, has a distinct obligation to the public to make its services available to all the people."

## NERVOUS HEART

THE mental state plays a big part in the development of a condition known as "nervous heart," Dr. Eugene S. Kilgore, of San Francisco, told members of the American Heart Association at their fifth annual scientific session at Portland. Disturbances of the heart or circulatory system may be the starting-point for the nervous heart condition, or it may be caused entirely by the upset mental state.

"The hereditary neurotic type of constitution is the important predisposing cause," Dr. Kilgore said. The neurotic symptoms are often more important than the diseased condition of the organ itself, more important, that is, in the practical sense of producing greater suffering and disability and offering greater possibilities for treatment.

This nervous heart is one of the most common conditions seen by the heart specialist, Dr. Kilgore stated. It is likewise one in which treatment may be brilliantly successful, but unfortunately this condition most often receives poor treatment, largely because the neurotic and psychic factors are overlooked.

Dr. Kilgore cited the case of a young man who had been idle for six months and in bed most of the time because of heart trouble. Careful examination failed to reveal any serious disorder, although the patient complained of various heart symptoms. It was found that the condition had developed suddenly when a doctor who had examined the patient for employment found what he considered a serious heart condition which was freely discussed in the patient's presence. The patient admitted that all his symptoms dated from that day and that previous to that time he had led an active life and had "never known that he had a heart."

Dr. Kilgore said he believed modern civilization plays a large part in the development of mental and nervous disturbances, especially those concerned with the heart.

"I refer not only to the familiar 'pace at which we live,' but rather to the general diffusion of knowledge about the vital function and the diseases of the heart. Valvular disease, high blood pressure and angina pectoris are common fireside topics." While he did not criticize the work of the American Heart Association and similar organizations with philanthropic and educational aims, he pointed out that they had stressed in the minds of the public the prevalence of heart disease. In this lies the proverbial danger of a little knowledge, which in this case might lead neurotic persons to work themselves into a state of nervous and mental disease and possibly as a result into this condition of nervous heart.

"It should be emphasized," he advised, "before the public that most 'heart symptoms' do not mean heart diseases at all, and that those who think they feel them should promptly transfer the responsibility to their medical advisers."

## MENTAL HYGIENE

MENTAL hygiene is proving its worth in many fields, among them education, jurisprudence and philanthropy. Members of the American Medical Association attending a symposium on the results of mental hygiene programs in colleges and schools heard that it can prevent the development of mental defectives and diminish the number of maladapted children, and that psychiatry, of which mental hygiene is a branch, is becoming increasingly useful in the handling of criminals.

Mental hygiene is concerned with the prevention of mental deficiency and insanity. It is a sort of social prophylaxis, explained Dr. Ira Wile, of New York City. It is of greatest usefulness in childhood, while adjustments and adaptations of personality are still going on.

Emotional maladjustments, sex difficulties, actual mental and nervous illness and various types of disciplinary problems are the chief difficulties of college students that are being satisfactorily dealt with by mental hygiene programs and psychiatric departments in the various schools and colleges, Dr. Winifred Richmond, of Washington, D. C., said. Dartmouth, Vassar and California were among the pioneers in this movement. During the five years since the work began at Vassar 185 girls and six teachers have been referred to the psychiatrist. More than twenty schools and colleges were represented at a conference on mental hygiene in schools and colleges held in Boston recently.

While psychiatry in criminal proceedings has got a bad name, the system now in use in Massachusetts has proved the real worth of this science when properly applied in dealing with criminals. Dr. Winifred Overholser, of the Massachusetts Department of Mental Diseases, explained that in his state all persons indicted for capital offenses or bound over for a felony, having been previously convicted of a felony or indicted for any other offense more than once, are examined in the state department of mental diseases. The examination is entirely routine. As a result no defendant is put on trial who is mentally unfit and the "battle of experts" which has disgusted and disturbed the public elsewhere has practically disappeared in the state.

### PHYSICAL AILMENTS AND EMOTIONAL STATES

A PAIN in the stomach is not always the real condition that sends people to a physician, Dr. George S. Stevenson, New York psychiatrist, told members of the American Medical Association at their meeting at Portland, Oregon, on July 10. The pain or other physical ailment may be real enough, but back of it very often an upset emotional state may be found, Dr. Stevenson explained. He interviewed 150 patients at the Cornell Clinic and found that in many cases there was a big difference between the patient's complaint and his motive in coming to the doctor.

The emotional or mental problems lying back of the pain or loss of appetite complained of are often more serious than the physical ailment, which may be entirely due to the mental or emotional state. Fear of disease, especially cancer, ranks high among these factors. Worry about one's condition, unstable personality, sex maladjustments, death of some member of the family, identification with illness of another (for instance, cancer in a relative), doctor's statements, financial worries, unhappy marital situation and uncongenial home were, in the order given, the emotional problems that brought the 150 patients to the Cornell Clinic for relief of some physical ailment.

These mental and emotional difficulties can not be ignored in treating the patients. Sometimes psychiatric treatment is required. Ignoring the emotional difficulty may drive the patient to the cultist who, in the absence of scientific medical training, seizes on this factor and thus gets a firm hold on the patient.

### HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE

HIGH blood pressure is chiefly due to that state of nervous irritability popularly known as "nerves," according to Dr. Arthur S. Granger at the meeting of the American Medical Association.

No cure is known for high blood pressure, so the treatment consists in trying to relieve the conditions in the environment that appear to aggravate it. This means attempting to make an excitable patient stop worrying or to displace an excitable nature by a calm one. It is a difficult task, as any one who has tried it knows.

Dr. Granger suggested that the development of high blood pressure might be avoided in some cases by suitable preventive measures. For instance, young people who have inherited highly sensitive nervous systems or in whose family high blood pressure is frequently found, should not indulge in too strenuous exercise. They should be discouraged from entering careers in which a high-tension life is a necessity.

When the condition, which is known to doctors as hypertension, has developed, proper regulation of the patient's life and habits can do much to prolong his life and prevent complications, Dr. Granger said. The patient must be taught to avoid as much as possible business worries and annoyances in the home. Social obligations must be limited and frequent vacations will relieve the tension. Golf, walking and supervised setting-up exercises are all recommended, though the amount of exercise should be suited to the patient's ability to stand it. Dr. Granger gave drugs only a small place in the treatment of high blood pressure.

### SKIN DISEASES THAT MAY DEVELOP INTO CANCER

CANCER is known to develop from various skin diseases. Some twenty of these were described by Dr. Joseph Jordan Eller, of New York, at the meeting of the American Medical Association. Most common among these diseases that may develop into cancer are venereal disease, skin disease caused by overdoses of radium and X-ray, certain kinds of moles, skin troubles peculiar to certain occupations, scars, skin affections caused by handling arsenic or taking it internally, and various other conditions, especially those that become inflamed. Black moles are always dangerous, particularly if located where they are subject to constant or even frequent irritation. If they give the slightest trouble they should be removed at once and completely, all at one time, Dr. Eller advised.

The occupations in which workers come into frequent contact with tar, which often causes cancer, are tar distillery, gas-works stoking, chimney-sweeping, benzene

distillery and work with creosote, tar roads, paraffin, anthracene, coal oil, aniline dyes and lampblack. Cancer from arsenic is found among those who work with paris green, wall-paper makers, smelters of various ores, furriers, tanners, farmers using arsenic sprays, and taxidermists. Those who handle the heavy mineral oils, mule spinners, brewers, and X-ray and radium workers are others whose occupations favor the development of cancer.

#### ITEMS

A NEW type of vaccine for typhoid fever, which prevents a fatal outcome and shortens the course of the disease, was described to members of the American Medical Association by Dr. Guiseppe Caronia, professor of infectious diseases of the Royal University at Naples, Italy. The vaccine is still in an experimental stage, and has not yet been used in the United States. It has not passed the rigid tests of the Hygienic Laboratory of the U. S. Public Health Service. However, over 1,000 cases in which it has been used successfully have been reported, most of them by Italian physicians. Best results are obtained with the vaccine when it is used promptly, Dr. Caronia said, the few instances of failures having occurred when it was given after the disease had reached an advanced stage and the patients had already become exhausted.

BECAUSE the average American diet is deficient in certain foods, it actually is a factor in the development of the degenerative diseases, members of the American Medical Association were told by Dr. Lovell Langstroth, of San Francisco. Dr. Langstroth made a detailed study of the diet of 501 persons suffering from such conditions as high blood pressure, hardening of the arteries, rheumatism, diabetes, heart disease and occasional unexplained headaches. He found that bread, meat, potato, all forms of sweet dessert and accessory foods like butter, cream, sugar, and mayonnaise made up 88 per cent. of the diet of these patients. A remarkable improvement took place when they were fed on a diet of vitamin-rich foods, namely, eggs, milk, fruit and vegetables.

THE famous "pep" so long characteristic of the American people is becoming a thing of the past, it appears from observations reported to the American Medical Association by Dr. C. W. Dowden, of Louisville, Ky. Dr. Dowden finds exhaustion or "lack of pep" is a constantly increasing complaint among his patients. About one of every five during the last two years have consulted him because of exhaustion, and had no specific underlying disease. Dr. Dowden gave four principal causes of this condition: the World War with its effect on the mental make-up of the people; influenza and its persistent after-effects; the quantity of bad alcohol drunk by both men and women, and carbon monoxide saturation of the atmosphere as a result of the increasing use of automobiles.

THE last ten years of intensive effort on behalf of crippled children has seen such an improvement in facili-

ties for their care, treatment and education that they no longer form a major problem. Instead the crippled adult has become the big problem of orthopedics, that branch of medicine that deals with diseases and injuries of the bones and joints, Dr. Walter G. Stern, of Cleveland, stated at the meeting of the American Medical Association. Orthopedic surgery received great impetus during the war. At that time the surgeon learned great skill in the care of injuries and also learned the importance of proper after-care. These lessons have been carried over to meet the industrial injuries of the present. Reeducation of muscles, treatment with electricity, and water, special exercises and massage have now been added to the surgical care of orthopedic cases.

BETTER training in obstetrics for medical students, especially those intending to engage in general practice, and increased hospital facilities for obstetrical patients are needed to reduce the maternal death rate in this country, declared Dr. Carl Henry Davis of the American Medical Association. The maternal mortality in the United States is still high. The greatest single cause of maternal deaths is toxic conditions associated with childbirth, in spite of the remarkable advances made in our knowledge of infections, Dr. Davis said. Obstetrics has been called the corner-stone of general medical practice, and forms a large part of the work of the family doctor. Consequently Dr. Davis would have more time devoted to obstetrical training in the medical schools.

MANY other diseases besides cancer are now being diagnosed and treated by X-rays and radium, and this method of treatment has grown so that it is becoming a new medical specialty in itself, Dr. Albert Soiland, of Los Angeles, stated at the meeting of the American Medical Association. Inflammations, sinus disease, erysipelas, asthma, neuritis, arthritis and even sciatica and trifacial neuralgia are among the diseases that have been improved or altogether cured by radiation treatment. The scope of the field is tremendous. It requires thorough training in medical sciences as a background for its practice, in Dr. Soiland's opinion.

SCIENTISTS have found that the bright child learns to talk and walk earlier than a child of lower intelligence. That this is true was proved by a statistical study reported to the American Medical Association by Dr. Isaac Abt, child specialist of Chicago. Records of 500 boys and 500 girls who have been referred to the Chicago Institute for Juvenile Research for examination were studied. The girls began to talk at an average age of eighteen months and the boys at nineteen months. The average age for walking was sixteen months. Dr. Abt said that he believed in general a child learns to talk in direct proportion to his mental development. Surprising individual variations were found, however, such as when a bright child showed a tardy development of speech. This study did not prove that, as is sometimes claimed, children with older brothers and sisters learn to talk earlier than only children.