

SCIENCE

VOL. 80

FRIDAY, JULY 6, 1934

No. 2062

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THE CONTINUING PROGRESS OF CANCER RESEARCH¹

By Professor WARD J. MACNEAL

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DURING a period of serious difficulty in the adjustment of human relationships throughout the world we find ourselves engaged in the consideration of a campaign against a common enemy of mankind which still defies us and which we do not quite fully understand. The worker in the field of cancer research sometimes feels discouraged because progress has been less rapid than he had hoped. The general public also appears to have the impression that cancer research is not making very rapid progress. In fact, however, there are many reasons for optimism. A comparison of the present outlook in regard to malignant disease with that of thirty years ago will indicate that a very marked advance has been accomplished. It is, however, quite evident that continued effort in cancer research must be maintained. The lengthening of the

average life of the human individual has served to increase the population in the older periods of life and it is in these age periods that malignant disease is most prevalent. For this very reason we have to expect a continuing increase in the incidence and death rate from malignant disease for some time to come. Modern civilization has also made the lives of persons beyond fifty years of age of greater value to the community, and it is becoming increasingly important to preserve these individuals in a state of efficiency for the service of humanity. Nowhere will one find any outcry against the expenditure of effort in the study of cancer except from those who feel that these efforts are being misdirected or are utterly futile.

The precise nature of malignant neoplastic disease can not be said to be fully elucidated as yet. In the study of a disease process a beginning is ordinarily

¹ Address of the president of the American Association for Cancer Research, Toronto, March 28, 1934.

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