

Medical Sciences Notes

CANCER RESEARCH

Don't Eat Too Many Pickles

Some types of pickles—especially the Japanese fukujinzuke—can cause marked changes in the human stomach, leading researchers to suspect that too many might cause stomach cancer. A comparison of the diet of 65 elderly Canadian men of Japanese origin from the Greater Vancouver area with diets of Caucasian Canadians has been made to find out whether second-generation Japanese have less stomach cancer than their forebears in Japan.

About 60 percent of the Japanese Canadians ate less bread, meats, milk, and other dairy products than the Caucasians did. Moreover, they ate Japanese-style food that was heavily pickled and salted. It was very often flavored with soy sauce and not uncommonly with vinegar. Lack of milk drinking and the use of salted food in Japan has been linked with stomach cancer, which is much higher there than in the U.S. and Canada.

Drs. W. C. MacDonald, F. H. Anderson and S. Hashimoto of the department of medicine, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, sampled bits of human stomach lining from men who ate 20 to 30 ounces of fukujinzuke or of vinegared gherkins over a three-day period, and found that marked changes occurred in the surface lining and in the gastric pits.

"The long-term effect of the ingestion of pickles and the degree to which the mucosa can adapt itself to such an insult is only speculative," the researchers conclude in the June 10 issue of the *CANADIAN MEDICAL JOURNAL*.

PUBLIC HEALTH

Only Half of Britons Over 16 Smoke

Only half of the population of England and Wales aged 16 and over smokes regularly, a summarized report to be published in full later this year reveals.

The British Ministry of Health is already using information in the report, which is based on a survey of the smoking habits of 854 adolescents and 984 adults, carried out by the Government Social Survey. Certain that heavy cigarette smoking is linked with lung cancer, heart diseases and other ailments, the Ministry has spent \$300,000 in the current year persuading people not to smoke. Even so, the Ministry has been accused of dragging its feet. Now that it has some facts to present about the decline of smoking, it is expected to conduct a more vigorous campaign.

The U.S. Public Health Service is spending more than \$2 million a year on educating the public on the dangers of smoking.

As in the United States, British advertising has associated smoking with romance, youth, adult poise, sociability and spring's exciting freshness.

The U.S. Federal Communications Commission, has ordered equal time be given to opponents of cigarette advertising on radio and television. A cigarette company petition has asked the FCC to rescind its decision.

The British report says people are more worried about cough and sore throat than about lung cancer as results of smoking. They give it up for these reasons, but the chief motive is the cost. They say smoking costs more than the pleasure is worth.

PUBLIC HEALTH

Heart, Cancer, Stroke Grant

Continuing support to a statewide program in North Carolina to improve diagnosis and treatment of heart, cancer and stroke is assured by a second-year grant of \$600,944 by the U.S. Public Health Service. This is \$75,000 more than last year's grant.

The North Carolina Regional Medical Program is headquartered in Durham and involves Duke University Medical Center, the University of North Carolina and Wake Forest College.

Many health agencies in the state, along with thousands of private physicians, are pooling their resources to institute a program aimed at giving better patient care. Already the University of North Carolina has an affiliation with the Moses Cone Hospital in Greensboro and with the Charlotte Memorial Hospital. Currently under way are negotiations for complete affiliation between Duke and Cabarras Memorial Hospital in Concord and between Wake Forest and Memorial Mission Hospital in Asheville.

Dr. Marc J. Musser, the program director, says pilot projects are underway in community hospitals.

GENETICS

Girl Lacks Heart Muscle Enzyme

A 16-year-old Bantu schoolgirl of the Pedi tribe in the Northern Transvaal is the first nonwhite person to be found who lacks the "silent" cholinesterase gene.

Cholinesterase is an enzyme contained in the heart muscle and other animal tissues. Its biologic importance is not well understood, three researchers report in the June 30 issue of *SCIENCE*.

Although persons lacking the enzyme, called ACAH, can be perfectly healthy, ACAH is essential for the rapid breakdown of a drug frequently used by anesthesiologists. If the normal enzyme is completely absent or replaced by a variant, paralysis and prolonged cessation of breathing can follow administration of the drug (suxamethonium, or succinylcholine). Serious and sometimes fatal consequences may result.

The absence of the enzyme is rare, even among the white race—only 11 persons (in eight families) have been reported.

Discovery of this first case among nonwhites was reported by Trefor Jenkins and Doris Balinsky of the South African Institute for Medical Research, Johannesburg, Transvaal, and D. W. Patient, Jane Furse Memorial Hospital, Sekhuniland, Transvaal.

IMMUNIZATION

Tetanus Shots Can Be Overdone

The U. S. Army now immunizes against tetanus only once every six years and is trying to stretch the time to once every 10 years.

Dr. Geoffrey Edsall of the Massachusetts Department of Public Health says many children are undergoing immunization to tetanus every year. He referred to the pre-summer camp enrollment health examination record as encouraging too much immunization.