

Mental State Factor in "Nervous Heart"

Medicine

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. 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 disease at all, and that those who think they feel them should promptly transfer the responsibility to their medical advisors."

Science News-Letter, July 13, 1929

Blames Nerves for High Blood Pressure

Medicine

High blood pressure is chiefly due to that state of nervous irritability popularly known as "nerves," declared 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 anyone 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 pa-

tient 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.

Science News-Letter, July 13, 1929

Mendel Memorial

Genetics

Gregor Mendel, the Austrian monk who founded the modern science of genetics, is to be remembered with a monument erected in his native village of Neu-Titschein, Czecho-Slovakia. Dr. Charles B. Davenport, director of the Station for Experimental Evolution of the Carnegie Institution of Washington, has been appointed to promote the project in America.

A group of scientists in Czecho-Slovakia have undertaken to raise \$3,000, of which they have now collected \$1,500. They are hoping to raise \$1,000 of the remainder among American scientists and philanthropists.

Science News-Letter, July 13, 1929

Diet Factor in Diseases

Medicine

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 meeting at Portland 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 average diet, which is lacking in vitamins and the so-called protective foods, prepared the background for the development of the degenerative diseases, in Dr. Langstroth's opinion. He called such a diet a deteriorating influence, and concluded that the prevalence of this class of diseases among Americans could be greatly reduced or entirely prevented by a different kind of diet, one which contained plenty of vitamins.

Science News-Letter, July 13, 1929