

News and Notes

NUCLEAR HELP FOR ARTHRITICS

More than 20 British hospitals are now using nuclear material to help crippled arthritic patients to walk. The research was carried out at Addenbrooke's Hospital, Cambridge (eastern England), where Mr. Philip Wraight, consultant in nuclear medicine, decided to use an isotope on rheumatoid arthritic patients.

Before Mr. Wraight's discovery, the complicated operation to open synovial membrane was not alup the knee joint and remove the ways successfully. The patient spends three weeks in hospital and, though the pain is relieved, the joint rarely recovers its full mobility.

Mr. Wraight says good results have been achieved in about half the cases receiving the "nuclear" treatment at Addenbrooke's. Some were wheelchair patients who are now walking freely and without a stick. He defined "good" results as "free of pain, or with good reduction in discomfort, no swelling, and the joint starting to work again".

He explained: "We inject radioactive colloidal material into the joint, and then bend the joint to mix it inside the cavity. The patient must not walk for two days, to ensure that the radiation is contained in the joint."

The isotope used is Yttrium-ninety which has a half life of about three days, decaying to half strength in three days and half again in another three days. It is short-lived and rapidly disappears from the body. Yttrium-ninety is a beta emitter. The beta (electron) radiation is absorbed in a few millimetres of tissue. A relatively high dose can be used as its effect is localised.

"We know relatively little about how it works", said Mr. Wraight. "We just know that it does, in most patients, that we have. We are getting good results with occasional failures." For those for whom the treatment has not worked, there is still the alternative of an operation.

TV MAY INDUCE EPILEPTIC SEIZURES

Watching television may induce seizures in epileptic patients, a recent British study has shown.

In the study, 32 epileptic patients, known to be sensitive to intermittent photic stimulation, were monitored for sensitivity to horizontal and vertical lines emanating from a properly functioning black and white TV set.

Twenty-three of the subjects were found to be at risk of seizure because of TV "line jitter".

LEVODOPA BOOSTS INTELLECTUAL RATING IN SENILE DEMENTIA

Levodopa produces marked intellectual improvement in patients with senile dementia according to the results of one study.

Dr. Brain R. Ballinger, Consultant Psychiatrist, Royal Dundee Liff Hospital and his colleagues included 14 patients in a doubleblinded crossover study. The patients received four weeks of placebo and four weeks of active drug.

The dosage given was initially 125 mg daily and this was increased over two weeks to 875 mg daily and none of the patients was receiving psychotropic drugs.

The patient's behaviour and intellect were assessed by rating scales made once a fortnight before and during the trial.

Ten of the fourteen showed clear improvement on the intellectual rating scale. The change in intellectual function was quite striking in some patients. There was no change in any of the ratings on the behaviour scale except for continence, which improved.

Dr Ballinger and his colleagues do admit that intellectual improvements in the absence of any corresponding improvement in behaviour may only be of limited value. Nevertheless, any treatment which shows any promise in this as yet incurable and disabling disease is worth pursuing, they said.

ROYAL SOCIETY OF MEDICINE

Taba Elected Honorary Fellow

Dr. A.H. Taba, WHO Director for the Eastern Mediterranean Region, has been elected an Honorary Fellow of the Royal Society of Medicine, England.

The award, made in London, was given to Dr. Taba in the company of a distinguished group of health scientists, including Miss Anna Freud, the world famous child psychologist and daughter of Sigmund Freud, and Professor Dorothy Hodgkin, the Nobel Prize winner and one of the most outstanding women scientists of the Century.

The Royal Society of Medicine, founded early in the 19th Century, is recognized as one of the most distinguished and oldest medical societies in the world. Its honorary fellowship

is the highest award it can give to foremost medical men and women, and which has only rarely been given to people from countries outside the United Kingdom.

In accepting the Honour with deep gratification, Dr. Taba said that he did so not only on his own behalf, but also on behalf of the many people in national and international medical circles working for the promotion of health in the Middle East.

Referring to the need which he had always stressed for the rapidly developing countries of this Region to be self-reliant in creating their own patterns of medical education and health services to meet their specific needs.

REHABILITATION OF DRUG ADDICTS

Rs. 12 million will be spent to open seven treatment and rehabilitation centres for the drug addicts by the Pakistan Narcotics Control Board with the assistance from UN and ILO.

The first such centre has already started working at Hyderabad where 35 beds have been added for this purpose to the Mental Hospital.

HUNGARIAN-WEST GERMAN PHARMACEUTICAL FACTORY FOUNDED IN DORTMUND

On June 8, Medimpex Hungarian Trading Company for Pharmaceutical Products signed a contract with the representatives of Dr. Thiemann G.m.b.H., West Germany and Akzo Pharma, Holland about the founding of a new joint venture. As planned the Hungarian-West German company will start its activity under the name Optifaro at the end of this year, half of it is paid by Akzo Pharma, the other half by the Hungarian party.

Nowadays it may take 3 to 5 or even 10 years to develop a new molecule, as a consequence the research work may consume several million dollars, therefore the main pharmaceutical factories of the world are, also in international relations, trying to share the burdens involved. This was one of the fundamental purpose of founding the Hungarian-West German joint venture. Optifaro will be responsible for the further development of the results of the Hungarian pharmaceutical research and for selling the new products developed jointly in the countries of the Common Market.

The West-German Company, Dr. Thiemann G.m.b.H. member of the Akzo Group has been cooperating for over 10 years with Medimpex

and the three leading pharmaceutical factories in Hungary, Chemical Works of Gedeon Richter Ltd., Chemical and Pharmaceutical Works Chinoin Ltd., and Egypt Pharmacochemical Works.

The annual turnover that Medimpex realizes in the countries of Common Market is about 35 million dollars, West Germany having a share of 13 million dollars in it. In 1977 the Hungarian trading Company exported pharmaceutical products in a value of 100 million dollars to western countries and it is hoped that with this new joint venture the volume of exports to western Europe and especially to the countries of the Common Market can be further increased.

HUMAN INSTITUTE FOR SEROBACTERIOLOGICAL PRODUCTION AND RESEARCH BUDAPEST, HUNGARY

This Institute has been engaged in the development and production of sera and vaccines in Budapest, Hungary since 1954.

The most important serobacteriological products of the Institute Human are combined diphtheria—pertussis—tetanus vaccine, tetanus antiserum and the cell-wall polysaccharide extract Mannozym conferring a specific immunity.

In 1974 the Institute has been appointed as WHO Reference Centre and after the 3-years period expired early this year, it has been extended for another 3 years by the WHO.