

Non-living Chemical Molecules Inside Cells Possible Cause of Cancer

LOS ANGELES (AP)—The possibility that non-living chemical molecules can "grow" wildly inside cells forms the basis of a new idea of cause of cancer. The idea was advanced by Dr. G. Wildman, a botanist at the University of California at Los Angeles. Dr. Wildman told about it at a conference with science writers on the American Cancer Society's tour of research laboratories.

There is no proof yet. If laboratory evidence of that nature is found later, scientists will have to revise their ideas about the mechanism of cell growth. This conceivably could alter the course of cancer research.

The idea parallels widely accepted ideas about the growth of viruses. A virus invades a living cell, and in a few minutes the cell explodes and several hundred viruses appear in the debris. The single invading virus commandeered the proteins inside the cell and rearranged them into copies of itself.

This virus, which may not be a living organism in the strict meaning of the word, "grows" in the sense that it reproduces itself. Therefore it is in some respects a living thing.

Dr. Wildman expressed the belief that something similar may happen to nucleoprotein, one of the important components of cell nuclei in animals as well as in plants. Nucleoproteins by themselves are non-living substances although they are essential to both plant and animal life.

Nucleoproteins are molecules, and so are viruses. Dr. Wildman thinks the nucleoproteins inside a cell under certain conditions may go on a rampage and multiply like viruses.

Normally the cell exercises control over the nucleoproteins and uses them in the process of growth and division. But if they go on a rampage they probably are out of control so far as the cell is concerned.

This coincides with the scientists' picture of cancer as a wild control over the nucleoproteins growth of cells.

In plants cell division is not as frequent as in animals. Often a cell grows just by enlarging itself without splitting into two cells. In this way a tobacco leaf can increase its length seven times in a week without producing any additional cells.



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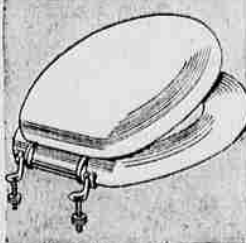
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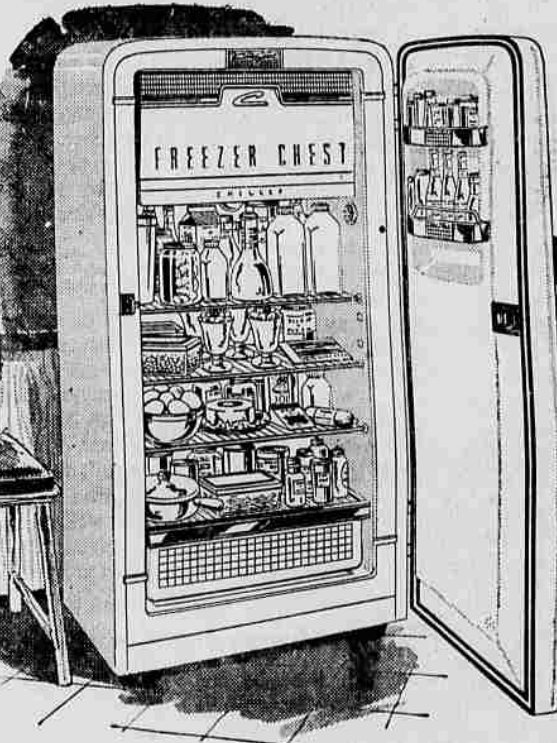
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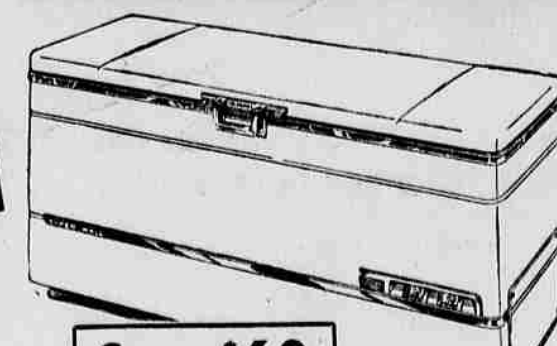
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