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CANCER A DISEASE OF CIVILIZATION?

Experts Differ on Question and
on Value of Radium.

OVERDOSE KILLED BREMNER?

Cornell Professor of Pathology Thinks
So, but Believes in Efficacy of the
Mineral—Statistician Declares Those
Reported Cured by it Never Really
Had Dread Disease.

Speakers who appeared before the
American Society For the Control of
Cancer in New York differed widely
as to the prevalence of the disease and
also as to the efficacy of radium treat-
ment for it. The meeting was called
to start a movement to acquaint the
public with the dangers of cancer and
especially with the danger of allowing
small cancerous growths to become
malignant and deep seated before ap-
plying for operations.

Frederick L. Hoffman, statistician,
who has made a specialty of collect-
ing information about cancer, asserted
that 75,000 adult persons died from
the disease last year in the United
States alone, while 500,000 persons
died from it in civilized countries. He
said that cancer was essentially a dis-
ease of civilization and was practically
unknown among primitive people and
savage tribes.

Dr. James Ewing, professor of pa-
thology of the Cornell university medi-
cal school, disputed Mr. Hoffman's as-
sertion. He said that cancer was not
only prevalent throughout the whole
human race, but that, far from being
a disease of civilization, it was preva-
lent in practically all lower animals
and was even found among trout and
codfish, which died from it in great
numbers.

Disputes Cures With Radium.
In discussing radium cures for can-
cer Mr. Hoffman said that a careful
study of hundreds of reported cures
had convinced him that the patients
affected were really not suffering from
cancer. He denied that any cure had
been effected by any means other than
the surgeon's knife.

With this Dr. Ewing disagreed also.
He said that cancerous growths had
been cured by radium when they were
local and when they had been treated
before the poisonous toxins from the
growth had spread through the whole
body. The limit of radium treatment,
he said, was confined to a depth of an
inch and a half or two inches, as that
was the extent of the penetrating pow-
er of radium rays beneath the skin.
He said that new ways were constant-
ly being discovered to apply radium so
that its curative power would be ex-
tended to even the most malignant
forms of the disease.

In response to questions asked him
after he had concluded his address Dr.
Ewing expressed the opinion that a
very large overdose of radium had been
administered to Representative S.
Bremner of New Jersey and that Mr.
Bremner's death was no doubt hasten-
ed by this too extensive application.
He pointed out that the correct dosage
for radium had not been determined
definitely and that much experiment-
ing must be done in this direction.

"The deaths from this disease," said
Mr. Hoffman, "have practically dou-
bled in the last forty years. The death
rate increases at the rate of 5 per cent
every decade. Statistics which I have
gathered concerning the disease prove
that no doctor operating for cancer
was ever infected by it and that no
person ever inherited it or passed it as
an infection to any other person."

"Cancerous cells are treacherous for
the reason that they have no nerve
stimulation connected with them. You
do not feel any pain as a cancerous
growth starts and so gain no warning.
The rich are afflicted more than the
poor. All persons are liable to be at-
tacked after they reach maturity. Most
often the disease appears after the vic-
tim has reached an age of forty years
or more."

"In England they eat five or six
meals a day and so constantly irritate
the stomach. It may be that this has
something to do with starting cancer-
ous growths, as English people suffer
heavily."

Urges Study of Localities.
"In Madison county, N. Y., cancer
has attained the highest level in the
United States as a cause of death. We
do not know why this is so, but I
wish some special study could be un-
dertaken to find out. There are other
small localities where the number of
cancer patients is especially large.
Study of these localities might give us
much more light than seeking in labo-
ratories to find the germ that causes
it or whatever the source of the dis-
ease may be. As a matter of fact, all
we know about it is that some cells
break loose in lawless fashion and
have a peculiar power to attract to
themselves all the nourishment taken
into the body."

"We need to do away with this word
"cancer,"" he said, "and bring into use
in its stead a number of expressions
that will rightfully describe the var-
ious kinds of growths that occur
among rebellious cells. As a matter of
fact, the growths are very different in
character, and we know so little about
them that I do not hesitate to say that
our cancer problem is the first problem
in importance before the medical pro-
fession."

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