

Solving Blood Pressure Problems Seen as Way To Save Many Lives

BY DELOS SMITH
United Press Science Editor

New York — A head-on scientific attack on all the medical problems of high blood pressure has been proposed by a not ed blood pressure expert, on the grounds that if those problems were solved, scores of lives would be saved every year.



Dr. I. McD. G. Stewart spoke especially of blood pressures which are high but not so high they have caused any damage yet or produced any sense of ill in the persons who contain them. The lives of many of these persons could be prolonged, he said.

He made the following statements as facts: (1) death or disability are produced by the damage excessive blood pressure produces in arteries and veins, and not by excessive blood pressure itself; (2) a reduction of blood pressure "can delay or arrest" this damage; (3) "a relatively slight" reduction might be enough in most people.

Blocks Nerve Centers
Right now medical science throughout the world is employing an effective blood-pressure-reducing weapon in the form of chemicals which "blocks nerve centers of the sympathetic nervous system. But this weapon is employed only in persons whose blood pressure is extremely excessive or has been excessive for so long, that life-shortening damage has been done.

In these severely ill persons, many of whom have reached the "malignant" high blood pressure stage and so, are at death's door, these chemical weapons have produced wonders in lowering pressures, keeping them down, and so prolonging life. Dr. Stewart said they had been proven "potent, practical, and reasonably predictable."

Then why not use them in all persons with only moderately elevated blood pressure—since life insurance statistics show that "any sustained rise of arterial pressure occurring short of old age, particularly in men, presents a grave long-term threat." There are two main reasons why not, he said. One is a lack of knowledge of how the

agents work in healthy bodies against blood pressure that is high but not very high.

New Control Studies

This is knowledge which medical science needs, and which it can obtain only in massive "con-

trolled" studies everywhere of the effects of the chemical agents in more-or-less normal persons. But at this point Dr. Stewart encountered his major difficulty and that big difficulty is people generally.

Mention blood pressure (if you are a doctor) to the average person and the mere mention of the subject increases his blood pressure. If you're going to have a "controlled" study of the chemical weapons in persons

whose blood pressures are not elevated by very much, you'll have to have their cooperation because you'd have to measure their pressures repeatedly for a few weeks. And so you'd have to tell these persons their blood

pressures. Dr. Stewart said he was against telling patients their blood pressures as of now, but if the blood pressure problems were solved, "The whole climate of professional and private opin-

ion" might change and then it would be possible to tell the patient about his high blood pressure "without inevitably releasing a flood of anxiety symptoms."

A British specialist, he made his proposal in a London lecture. That lecture now is being widely discussed among American medical scientists.

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