

The Medical Roundup

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Lichen Planus

Quite a few people ask about lichen planus. It is a skin disease which consists usually of small nodules in the skin which have scales on them which often have a slightly violet color. At the beginning, the rash is often confined to one area of the body, and then it may spread elsewhere. It tends to be symmetrical — often on the fronts of both forearms or on the backs of both legs, or over the lower part of the spine. It may also be on the private parts. Occasionally, it may go into the scalp, on into the mouth.

Sometimes the lesions are mistaken for those of shingles. A characteristic symptom is itching, which may be severe or mild. Some authorities think it is due to a virus, but it is probable that the disease has several causes rather than one. Some men have been impressed by a nervous factor. I remember that one of my patients with this disease broke out with it when she learned that her husband had been stealing money from his firm.

Occasionally, a rash that looks like lichen planus follows the use of certain drugs. Naturally, when doctors don't know what the cause of a disease is, they have to try out many treatments, no one of which can be counted on to produce results. If I had any skin disease, I would go quickly to a good skin specialist and stay with him as long as he asked me to. He might want to try out a number of drugs.

Knee Injuries in Football

One of the commonest injuries of the football player is sustained in one or both knees. So often, during tackling, such tremendous strain is put on the knee joints that something has to give way. The tough ligaments which hold the thigh bone and the leg bone together are sometimes badly torn. Sometimes there is a tear in the tough capsule around the joint. Occasionally, there is a break in the end of one of the bones, or there is a loosening-up and displacement of the little rubber-like cushion that lies between the two bones. Later, as a result of the injury, serious arthritic changes can take place.

In an article by Dr. A. Brant Lipscomb of Vanderbilt University, Nashville, Tenn., he

tells of the frequency with which he sees these bad knee injuries and what can be done for them. Often the player has to go on crutches for a while. He has to have exercises, and sometimes an operation, or injections of hydrocortisone into the joint.

Sometimes the joint has to be opened and the little disc has to be sewed into place. Dr. Lipscomb recently saw 67 of these knee injuries. In some cases he could get a result good enough so that the football player could go back into the game. In other cases, the man went back in, but his knee kept hurting him; in other cases he had to give up football entirely. In some cases the man will probably suffer all the rest of his life from attacks of pain in the joint.

Ovarian Hormones Don't Produce Cancer

So often in years past, when I have seen a woman of 50 suffering terribly from menopause hot flushes and I have put her on a tiny daily dose of stillbestrol, which quickly gave relief, I have seen her return in a month, all upset again. What had happened was that when her home doctor discovered what she was taking, he had a fit, and said she would get a cancer. Many of us doctors still have that queer idea. It all traces back to a little work which was done many years ago in mice. These tiny animals were given huge doses of ovarian extract for all of their short lives, and a few got cancer.

Obviously, this experiment was very different from what happens in the case of a 140-pound woman who is given an extremely tiny dose of the drug for perhaps six months out of her 75 years of life. Actually, I have never seen a case in which I thought the giving of ovarian hormones had produced cancer, and today many of the leading professors of gynecology in the United States tell me that they have no fear of giving ovarian extract.

Now, I am pleased to get a letter from Dr. Grace T. Newman of Montclair, N. J., who says that she has just completed a study of some 40,000 vaginal smears made with the Papanicolaou technique, and the patients whom she found to have cancer of the uterus or of the breasts, not a single one had been treated with estrogens. Dr. Newman feels as I do that there is no danger in taking the small doses of estrogens that are needed to relieve the flushes of the menopause.

Cracking Joints
Some people want to know why their joints crack, particularly their knees. Ever since I was boy my knee joints have cracked when I have squatted down, but this has never worried me. I guess the cracking is connected with the fact that I have a tendency to fibrositis, which is a sort of arthritis. Certainly, I know of nothing to do about it. As long as I can walk along comfortably on my two knee joints, I won't worry about their cracking.

Dr. Alvarez' new booklet on nervousness may be obtained by sending 25 cents in a large, stamped, self-addressed envelope with your request to: MMT, The Register and Tribune Syndicate, Box 957, Des Moines 4, Iowa.

(Released by The Register and Tribune Syndicate, 1959)

Senior Citizens Taken on Tours

One of the features of the local observance of senior citizens week May 17 to 23 has been afternoon tours of the Rogue Valley for ambulatory patients of nursing homes arranged by the health committee of the Rogue Valley Council for the Aging.

Many of the patients in nursing homes do not have relatives or friends able to take them out, and the health committee, through the Friendly Visitors service, is attempting to be of help.

Approximately 50 residents of licensed homes are being given rides and there are more than 45 volunteers of the Friendly Visitors service who are making calls in the homes each week. There is a need for at least another 40 to 50 for this service, the committee reported.

First in Series Set for Television

The first in a series of television programs on "One Hundred Years in Medicine" will be presented by the Jackson County Tuberculosis and Health association at 9:30 p.m. Saturday, May 23.

The Jackson County Medical society is cooperating in the series which will help observe Oregon's Centennial. Participating in the first program, "Pioneer Medicine," will be Dr. John T. Brandenburg and Dr. John L. Welch, specialists in diagnosis and internal medicine, and Dr. Edward W. Sickels, general surgeon.

The physicians will discuss some early medical discoveries, problems of the pioneer doctor, and some of the epidemics and diseases commonly encountered on the wagon trails. They will include happenings of local interest.

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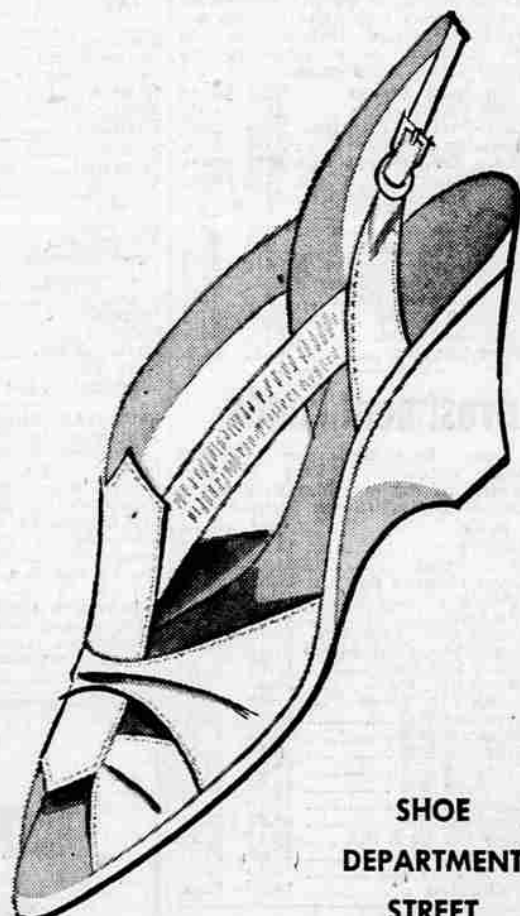


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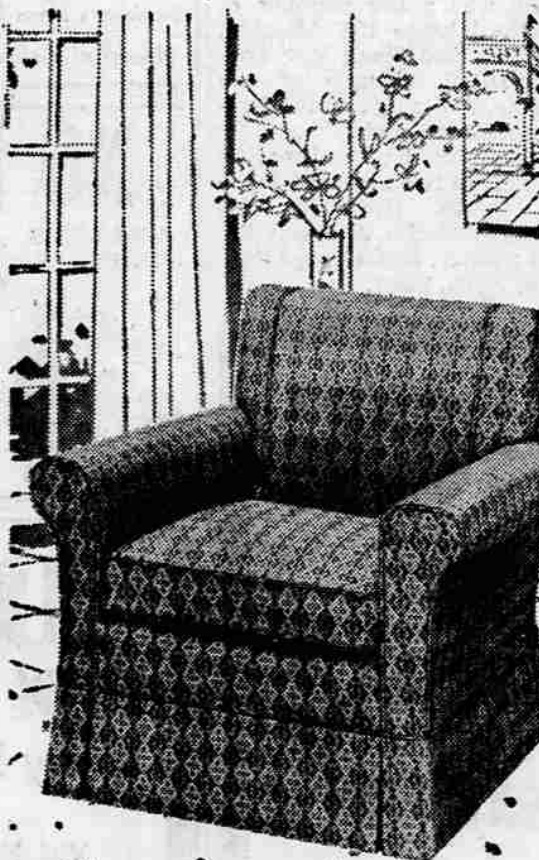
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