

Painful Spinal Disease Linked To Heart Damage

Bethesda, Md. — (Science Service)—Heart damage and colitis may be important clues to a painful spinal disease.

Research reported here at the second Pan American Congress on Rheumatic Diseases links "poker spine," or ankylosing spondylitis, an extreme form of a type of spinal arthritis, with damage to the aortic valve and to bowel inflammation.

Six cases of poker spine were discovered among 100 patients with ulcerative colitis. Drs. Nathan J. Zvaifler and W. Martel of Ann Arbor, Mich., said. X-rays of patients with this bowel condition should be carefully examined for the occasional case of spinal arthritis that develops, they suggested.

Aortic Valve Affected
The aortic valve which controls blood flow pumped by the heart to the main artery ororta is uniquely affected in cases of poker spine (called so, because it produces "a stiff, frozen back").

In this disease, Dr. Hugh A. Smythe of Toronto, Canada, explained, collagen, a soft supporting material of the body, is attacked.

In studying the heart in several cases of poker spine, Dr. Smythe found, "the whole valve mechanism is dilated and sags downward into the outflow tract of the left ventricle or pumping chamber of the heart. However, he pointed out that the development of satisfactory oxygenating pumps have made direct aortic valve surgery possible in some cases.

Only Helpful Treatment
New evidence that hormone treatment intensifies blood vessel inflammation in rheumatoid arthritis patients was also presented to scientists attending the Congress.

Steroids are now the only known helpful treatment for reducing joint inflammation temporarily. Dr. J. Peter Kulka of Boston, Mass., explained they also tend to increase the pre-existing vessel inflammation.

Studies of some 12 rheumatoid arthritic patients, half of whom had received steroids, indicate that blood vessel inflammation is a "primary, direct manifestation" of the disease and that steroids only intensify the inflammation.

Salem—UPD—A freeway operations seminar dealing with problems of design, construction, maintenance and law enforcement on new super-highways will be held in Eugene June 18-20 by the Institute of Traffic Engineers.

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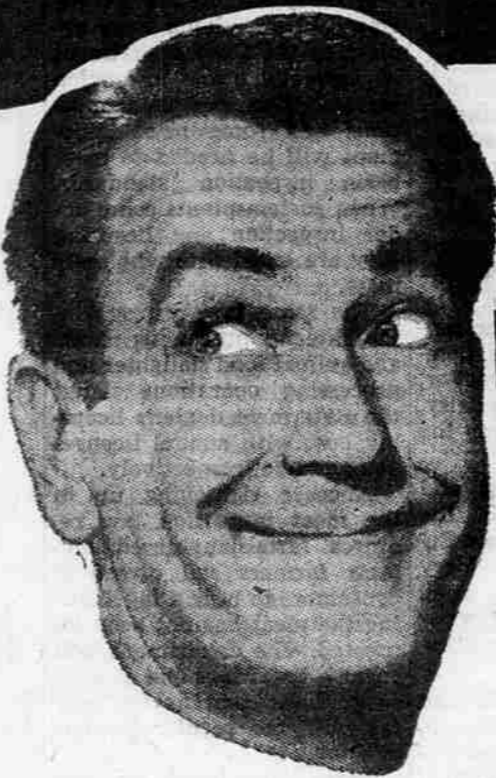
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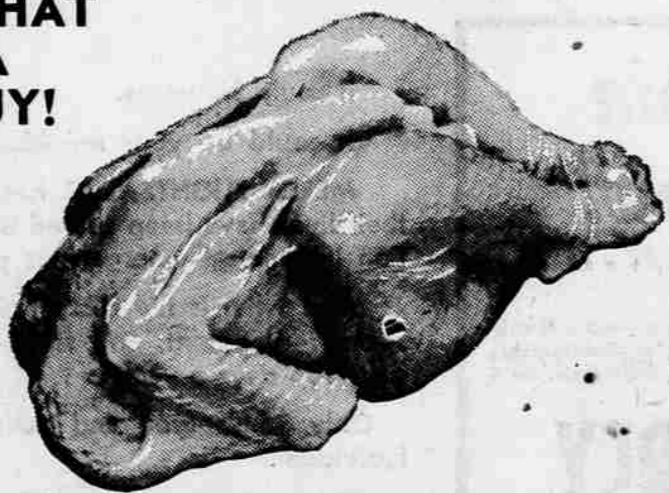
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