

The Medical Roundup

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Sudden Death in Children

One of the most distressing happenings in life is the sudden death of a lovely child, perhaps during a minor operation. Often, then, it takes years for the parents and the doctor to get over the shock of the occurrence. The parents and the doctor keep wondering what could have caused the death; they keep blaming themselves, and wondering if, in some way, the disaster could have been foreseen and avoided. In many cases even a careful autopsy has failed to show why the child died.

Now comes Dr. Louis Goodman of Pittsburgh to describe how, in some cases, with special techniques, a pathologist (who studies the tissues with a microscope) can show the presence of a disease called endomyocardial fibroelastosis, which scars and greatly weakens the heart muscle. In five cases, an infant was found dead in its crib, and the poor mother was filled with a terrible sense of guilt because she thought the child had suffocated with the bed-clothes over its nose and mouth. But at each autopsy there was found the peculiar form of heart disease, plus a little pneumonia — just enough to trigger the death. Other children with this disease died with a beginning measles, or during a tonsillectomy, a spinal tap, or a very minor operation. In one case, a 14-year-old boy collapsed and died after running to catch a ball.

As Dr. Goodman said, we do not yet know just what disease leaves the scars and the weakness in the heart muscle. What has impressed me much, of late, has been the discovery that some of the viruses that commonly give children a fever tend to attack and injure the muscle of the heart. They can leave the heart so weakened that it takes only a very little extra infection to cause death.

Regional Enteritis
There is a strange, puzzling, and fortunately rare disease in which the wall of a short segment of the small bowel becomes thickened and chronically inflamed. Unfortunately, the cause is not known, and even the strongest antibiotics have no curative effect. In one series of cases, the average age at onset was 24 years. The earliest symp-

toms are likely to be crampy abdominal pain, with much gas, and perhaps vomiting and diarrhea and some fever. The diagnosis usually can be made with the help of x-rays.

Recently, there appeared an authoritative article by Drs. B. P. Colcock and J. H. Vansant of the Lahey Clinic, of Boston. They reported the results of treating 36 patients with this disease. Of these, 28 per cent were operated on. Of the 304 who were operated on at the Lahey Clinic, with removal of the diseased segment, 76.3 per cent got a good result. Some of the patients had to be operated on a second or a third time, but 52.2 per cent of them eventually got a good and lasting result. Evidently, then, although the disease is usually a severe and dangerous one, in perhaps one in six cases the patient can get by on medical treatment, and in three out of four of the patients operated on, a good result can be obtained by an able surgeon.

A Foreign-Born Child
Dr. Morris A. Wessel of New Haven, Connecticut has recently written a fine study of some of the problems of adopting a child. As he says, in this country, in 1957, some 190,000 unmarried mothers were reported to birth registration authorities. Of these mothers one in five was under the age of 18. Many came from college campuses.

Naturally, there are many terrible problems that face these girls when their baby is born. Some don't want to see the baby and some do. Often the girl's parents are terribly distressed over what has happened. Under these circumstances, a wise and kindly physician can do much to help the girl and her family to decide what to do with the baby.

The women in a fine "placement agency" can help even more. If the child is to be given for adoption, the sooner this is done the better. It is not good for a child to be left a while in an "orphan asylum." If an infant is to develop a normal temperament he should have frequent attention from a loving woman.

Dr. Wessel advises against people's adopting, a sight-unseen, perhaps "malnourished, frightened, uncommunicative Korean waif." Many families who have tried this sort of thing have found the experience disappointing and even unbearable, and the end result has been hard on the child.

Dr. Alvarez' booklet on heart trouble may be obtained

16 MAIL YOURS. Address: **Friday, May 6, 1960**

Project Echo Shot Postponed

Cape Canaveral, Fla. — (UPI) — The United States is expected to try again next week to get a trouble-ridden space rocket into the skies with its "radio mirror" balloon satellite Echo 1.

The shot, which had been set for today, was grounded for the week end by a balky second stage in the new rocket.

Scientists first had hoped to get the 100-foot sphere into the skies Thursday. Then came one 24-hour delay and finally Thursday's indefinite postponement.

Indications were that the launching, first in the Project Echo series to develop a system of global communications, would be attempted "sometime next week." No definite date was mentioned.

An auto-pilot in the second stage of the 92-foot tall Thor-Delta rocket, which will be making its space duty debut, was blamed for the postponement.

Once the balloon is in orbit 1,000 miles up, scientific radio stations will try to span the continent via radio by bouncing signals from it.

BIG-SPENDING MAYOR
Nashville, Tenn. — (UPI) — A truck hauling a 90-foot missile got caught briefly in traffic Thursday before the home of Mayor Ben West. City Councilman Charles Brammell happened along and shouted to West, "my gosh, Mayor, what have you bought now?"

by sending 25 cents and a large, stamped, self-addressed envelope with your request to Dr. Walter A. Alvarez, Dept. MMT, The Register and Tribune Syndicate, Box 957, Des Moines 4, Iowa. (Released by The Register and Tribune Syndicate, 1960)

Douglas Demo Head To Back Davidson

Reedsport — (UPI) — Douglas county Democratic Chairman Clyde Dewitt Sr. announced today that he is supporting National Committeeman C. Girard Davidson in his bid for reelection.

Dewitt is party chairman in the home county of State Rep. Al Fiegel, Roseburg, who is seeking Davidson's seat on the Democratic National committee.

Dewitt said Davidson, a former assistant secretary of the interior under President Truman, "has turned the nation's eyes to Oregon for leadership in the field of natural resources."

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