



FILES BANKRUPTCY—Mickey Rooney, shown in 1961 photo, who earned an estimated \$12 million in an acting career that started when he was a child, has filed a bankruptcy petition, listing debts of \$484,914.12 and assets of \$500. Included in the petition filed June 11 in U. S. District Court by the 39-year-old actor were back debts totalling \$22,950 to three ex-wives. (UPI)

The Medical Roundup

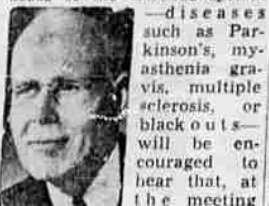
by

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New Studies of the Chemistry of the Brain

Those persons who today are suffering from diseases of the nervous system



—diseases such as Parkinson's, myasthenia gravis, multiple sclerosis, or blackouts—will be encouraged to hear that, at the meeting of the American Academy of Neurology just held in New York City, a number of the men who read papers told of studies of the chemistry of the brain of sick persons, as compared with the chemistry of the brain of well persons.

Others had studied the amount of certain important chemicals in the blood or in the urine of nervously ill people. I am so glad that at last men who are interested in troubles of the brain have given up the habit of just sitting in an armchair and spinning theories. A new group of young psychiatrists are now going into laboratories, and with the help of the techniques of chemistry and physics, are gathering actual facts. Many belong to the new Society of Biological Psychiatry.

Most of us have heard of Adrenalin (epinephrine) which is a very important and powerful constituent of the blood which is likely to pour out of the adrenal gland into our blood when we get angry, or when we have to face some grave emergency. Recently

another important substance was found in our bodies called noradrenalin, and it has important effects on the nervous system.

Now a related substance called dopamine has been found, and students of brain function are studying its effects. They are much interested, also, in a substance called serotonin which has something to do with making our brains work normally. Many studies are now being made to see if a man suffering from insanity may perhaps be poisoned by an excess of some chemical substance in his blood or in his brain.

Already, differences are being found in the bloods of sane and insane persons, and studies are being made to show why certain chemicals have a bad effect on the brain and others have a good, calming effect.

At a meeting in New York City, there was a paper on the chemistry of the body in patients with Parkinson's disease. This is a new approach to the problem which later may give direction to the work of those chemists who are constantly hunting for drugs that will relieve the distresses of the person who suffers from a tremor and stiff muscles.

Another paper on the program was on the excretion of amino acids (fragments of the proteins in animal tissues) in children with petit mal, the minor form of epilepsy. Definite abnormalities were found, and this is very interesting and suggestive for future research.

Also, in the cases of people with familial periodic paralysis (a strange disease in which certain members of a family will suddenly and temporarily become paralyzed), it was found that there is more than the normal amount of potassium in the blood.

Very interesting was a paper in which Drs. William A. Sibley, Howard J. Tucker, and Clark T. Randt reported that half of 40 children with a form of petit mal (the child becomes more or less unconscious for a few seconds several times a day) in which the spells could not be stopped with the help of the drugs usually given, were practically cured with Quinacrine, which is a synthetic remedy used to cure malaria. Strangely, it sometimes helps greatly in cases of generalized lupus erythematosus (a rare disease).

The important and very hopeful fact that came out of this great conference is that psychiatry is coming out of the long period in which there was little besides repetition and amplification of improbable theories, and is now going into a period in which every year a number of fascinating, new, chemical discoveries are being made.

Also, the 40-year-long absolute taboo of any mention of the heredity of mental troubles is breaking down. In the last six years, a tremendous advance has taken place in the study of the genetics of the diseases of man, and two big books on psychiatry have come out with good chapters on the heredity of mental troubles.

If you've noticed a decided change of character in a loved one for no apparent reason, chances are he's suffered a little stroke. To know more about these, you'll want to read Dr. Alvarez's booklet, "Little Strokes." To obtain it, send 25 cents and a stamped, self-addressed envelope with your request to Dr. Walter C. Alvarez, Dept. MMT, The Register and Tribune Syndicate, Box 957, Des Moines 4, Iowa.

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