

The Medical Roundup

by

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Why Measure Prothrombin Time?

Quite a few people today who have had a coronary thrombosis, or so-called heart attack, due usually to the plugging up of a little artery in the heart, want to know why they are taking a drug called coumadin.

Actually they are taking it because it cuts down on the tendency of their blood to clot in their arteries. Several sets of statistics have shown that during the last 15 years, when many persons who have had a heart attack were treated with coumadin or some similar drug, their tendency to get another attack has been definitely lessened. The only trouble has been that some of the people when put on large doses of the drug have bled badly. They have done this for one of a number of reasons: one being that the physician did not insist that the patient have his prothrombin time measured at least once a month.

This measurement of the rate of blood clotting (under certain conditions) must be made in a good laboratory, because, even when it is well carried out, abnormal readings CAN be made. The test should be made from time to time to see 1) whether the patient is being well enough protected from getting another heart attack, and 2) to make certain that his blood clotting time is not being so greatly lengthened that a serious spell of bleeding might take place. To stop such bleeding if it should start, the patient should always carry with him some tablets of Vitamin K. Taking this medicine would serve quickly to correct the abnormal tendency to bleed.

Recently I read the statement by a wise physician who said that he will give coumadin or a similar drug only to persons who have sufficient intelligence, sufficient willingness to take care of their health and perhaps sufficient income so that they will keep getting a prothrombin measurement once or twice a month. The doctor will not be responsible for giving such

a potentially dangerous drug to a man who will take it carelessly and without having its effect measured from time to time.

I regret to have to say here that a number of recent reports have shown that some physicians, with their great desire to protect the patient from getting another heart attack, have gone too far, and have used a dosage of coumadin so high as to endanger life.

The way I feel about this problem is that if a patient of mine has to depart this world, I would much rather that he go with another heart attack — which he got all by himself — than that he died because I gave him too big a dose of the drug. I think the recently published statistics show that a case of the drug that causes the prothrombin time to be 2 or 3 times the normal is too big for safety. Often, the time is expressed as a percentage. I personally will not let my blood go below 40 per cent.

Black Spot in Field of Vision
Every so often a person, usually past middle age, writes to say that suddenly one day a black spot appeared in the field of vision of one eye. The spot moves widely with the motion of the eye from side to side and up and down. Usually, what happened in these cases was that a tiny drop of blood leaked from a small artery into the jelly-like material which fills most of the eyeball. Usually, when the ophthalmologist (eye specialist) looks in with his special little electrically-lighted apparatus, he can see the spot. He will say that there is nothing to do about it, except to wait and hope that it gets absorbed and disappears. He may say that the person will soon get so used to it that he will see it only when looking at a white ceiling.

Dr. Alvarez lists and comments on other eye conditions commonly worried about in his booklet, "How to Safeguard Your Vision." Particularly of interest to persons past middle age, the booklet may be obtained by sending 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.



CUSTODY SOUGHT—Kenneth, 14-month-old son of Jacqueline Rose, who was picked up with her bank robber boy friend, Bobby Wilcoxson, by the FBI at Baltimore, Md., is shown playing with nurse Mary Ann Goodwin at City Hospital in Baltimore where he is being kept pending determination of legal custody. A Texas woman, identifying herself as Fern Rose, Kenneth's grandmother, wrote to the Baltimore sheriff's office claiming custody. (UPI)

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Horrendous Poetry

Council To Resist All-Number Calling Objects To Loss of Exchange Identity

By DICK WEST

Washington—UPI—The telephone company, as everyone knows, has a program under-



way to convert its dialing system to what it blandly describes as "all-number calling." Eventually, all exchange names will be replaced by numbers and telephone subscribers will be identified solely by digits. For example, my rolling euphonious "Jefferson 3-3355" would become a cold, impersonal "533-3355."

Many of us subscribers object to having our exchange names amputated but we thus far have been unable to mount any sort of effective defense.

As one exchange after another fell before the relentless onslaught of "all-number calling," the resistance movement all but crumbled for lack of central force and direction. Even so, we may yet save the day.

There has now appeared on the scene, with shining lance and armor, a young Harvard student, Mike Laurence by

name, who could become our man on the white horse.

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Calling." In case you are not familiar with this organization, I should explain that it is the citizens' division of "The Council to Resist All-Number Calling (CRANC)," which Laurence also founded.

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