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Physician Reports Radiation Plus Drug Helps Lung Cancer Patients

BY HARRY NELSON
Times Medical Editor

LA JOLLA—The lives of the seminar at least 4.5 million patients with lung cancer. Non-Americans have under-appear to have been length-active thyroid glands, a-ened significantly by a condition which could en-combination treatment of hance degenerative diseases. radiation and a potent anti- The vast majority, he said, cancer drug, a Wisconsin are unaware of their defi- physician reported here ciency.

Insufficient thyroid hor- mone has been associated with hardening of the arte- ries, fat accumulation in heart arteries which may lead to heart attacks and sluggish brain function.

He said there is also suspi- cion it predisposes a person to cancer.

The physician, an inter- nationally recognized thy- roid authority, was ex- tremely critical of new Food and Drug Administration regulations which he said are holding up clinical ap- plications of new drugs use- ful in the treatment of severe conditions related to the thyroid.

"This is a typical instance of the government taking over the functions which should be performed by private industry and the medical profession," he told the science writers.

Earlier this week Dr. Frances O. Kelsey, the woman FDA physician credited with keeping thalidomide off the market in this country, told the seminar there is a backlog of 2,500 new drug applications processing of which will require a 10-fold increase in staff.

She said once the backlog is out of the way in June, there should be no delay in approving "good" drugs.

Dr. Paul Starr, emeritus professor of medicine at the USC School of Medicine, told

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THE SMOKER'S LATEST ENEMY

By Earl Ubell
Science Editor

LA JOLLA, Calif.
Cigarettes have spread a new plague through our population, scientists have discovered. It is an epidemic of emphysema, a lung ailment that leaves its victims gasping for breath. The evidence comes from the microscope. Slices of lung from smokers and non-smokers revealed drastic differences in the air sacs and blood vessels. The smoker's lung showed severe damage.

All this came out in the closing session of the American Cancer Society's annual seminar for science writers. While the society is interested in cancer, the emphysema story came out of the research as a by-product.

Dr. Oscar Auerbach of the Veterans Administration Hospital, East Orange, N. J., told how he and three associates had studied smoking in lungs in 1,500 men who had died at the Veterans Hospital between 1955 and 1960.

His verdict: "We are becoming a nation of lung cripples."

The microscopic examination was carried out by Dr. Auerbach and Dr. Arthur Purdy Stout, one of the world's leading experts on the microscopic analysis of tissue. The statistical work was done by Dr. E. Cuyler Hammond chief statistician for the Cancer Society, and Dr. Lawrence Garfinkel.

The charts and graphs told the story clearly. First, there was the microscopic sign of the rupturing of the air sacs.

The men who had never smoked had little or no rupturing. The men who did had a high degree of breakage, which increased sharply with age and the amount of smoking they did.

For example, at age 45 or younger one-third of the men who smoked more than two packs a day had many ruptured air sacs. At age 60, nine out of ten of these men had broken air sacs. Even those who smoked less than a pack a day had increasing lung liability, rising to half the men at age 60. The non-smokers had next to nothing.

Dr. Auerbach showed similar pictures for the thickening of the air sac walls, for the narrowing of the small and large arteries and for the other microscopic aspects of emphysema. All this means that with increasing age the men find it more difficult to breathe.

Previously, Dr. Auerbach had suggested that similar lung changes accounted for the high heart attack rate in heavy smokers. His idea was that some other disease affected the heart first—for example, coronary artery narrowing—and then the smoke-afflicted lungs embarrassed the weakened heart, making it work harder and perhaps triggering a heart attack.

In all the studies, those who were best off were the non-smokers, next came the cigar and pipe-smokers and worst were the heavy cigarette smokers.

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