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RHEUMATIC FEVER

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sils removed are less likely to have a serious attack of the affliction.

Strikes At Heart

Rheumatic fever's most serious effects are on the heart and that is why it is so urgent to discover the disease early. If a child is kept quiet and in bed before the disease has had the opportunity to make much progress, his heart may be saved from serious injury.

Although the cause is not known, it is known that children who get plenty of sunligat, proper nourishment and wear adequate clothing are not so likely to contract the disease.

Flourishes In Poverty

"Poverty, malnutrition and unhygienic surroundings furnish the most favorable human soil for development of this infection," a physician is quoted as saying. The disease is also found to a lesser degree in higher income families.

Unlike some childhood diseases, it may be contracted more than once by the same child; in fact, a child who has had it is more likely to contract it again unless special emphasis is placed on personal hygiene, rest and sunlight."

Also Hits Adults

The disease itself is a paradox. A disease of childhood, it frequently attacks adults. A "city disease," it occurs as well in the country. A disease of lower income groups, it often hits the children of the rich. Classified as noncontagious it is not uncommon for two children in a family to contract it. The disease is not as serious as its after-effects.

In two-thirds of the cases the heart is affected permanently. Nevertheless, former rheumatic fever cases can and do live normal lives. Examining the records of 1,000 of the fever cases ten years later, the Council on Rheumatic fever has found that 439 can participate in normal activity as though they never had the disease, 209 have slight limitation, 135 have serious limitation and 203 died within 10 years (the records of 14 are missing).

Suggested Preventatives

How can the scourge of rheumatic fever be stopped?

Dr. David Rutstein, medical director of the Council on Rheumatic Fever, says that the disease can be checked with knowledge.

Rheumatic heart disease can be prevented, Dr. Rutstein maintains, by regular medical examinations as a precautionary measure—as often as once a week when the child is suspected of having rheumatic fever.

The council recommends educating all doctors and all parents about the disease and its symptoms so that it can be caught in early stages before the heart is affected. The Children's Bureau of the Federal Security Agency is working to enlarge its education program about the disease.

Pennsylvania Clinics Lead

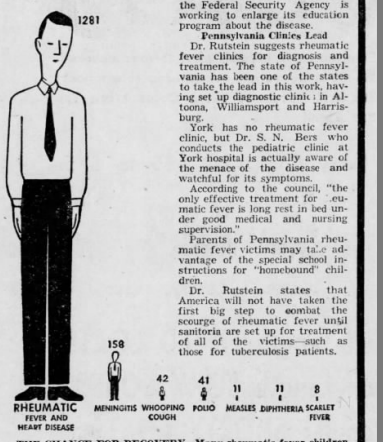
Dr. Rutstein suggests rheumatic fever clinics for diagnosis and treatment. The state of Pennsylvania has been one of the states to take the lead in this work, having set up diagnostic clinics in Altoona, Williamsport and Harrisburg.

York has no rheumatic fever clinic, but Dr. S. N. Bers who conducts the pediatric clinic at York hospital is actually aware of the menace of the disease and watchful for its symptoms.

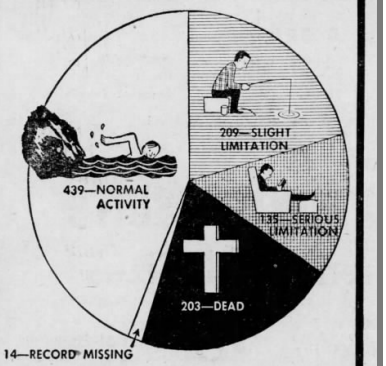
According to the council, "the only effective treatment for rheumatic fever is long rest in bed under good medical and nursing supervision."

Parents of Pennsylvania rheumatic fever victims may take advantage of the special school instructions for "homebound" children.

Dr. Rutstein states that America will not have taken the first big step to combat the scourge of rheumatic fever until sanitoria are set up for treatment of all of the victims—such as those for tuberculosis patients.



THE CHANCE FOR RECOVERY—Many rheumatic fever children recover and live normal lives. Chart shows status of 1,000 rheumatic fever cases ten years later. The data for this Graphic Associates chart was compiled by T. Duckett Jones.



DEATHS FROM RHEUMATIC FEVER—Chart above, prepared by Graphic Associates, compares rheumatic fever deaths with deaths from other childhood diseases. The figures are annual average, 1942-45, in New York City. Statistics for entire nation are unavailable, as rheumatic cases are not reported to authorities in most states.

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