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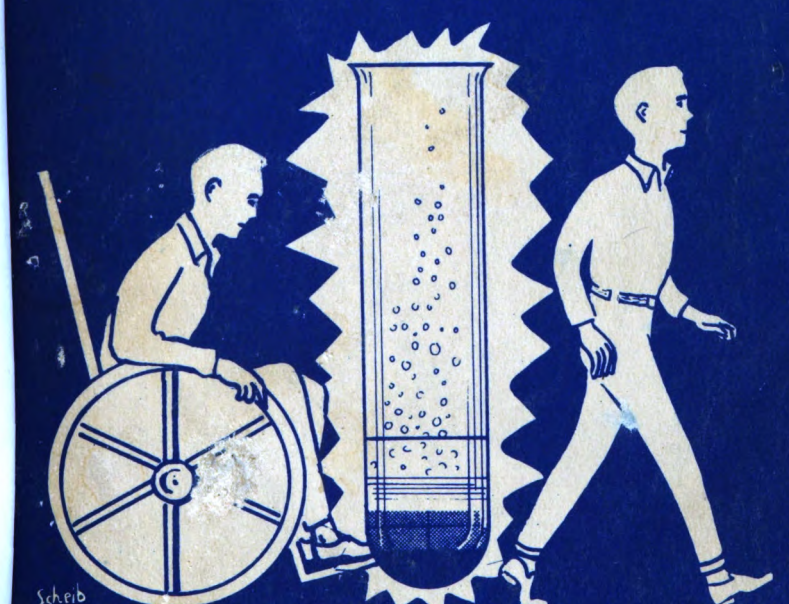
BLIC AFFAIRS PAMPHLET No. 166

RTHRITIS — AND THE MIRACLE DRUGS

By Alton L. Blakeslee

THRITIS AND RHEUMATISM FOUNDATION



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First Edition, October, 1950



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ARTHRITIS— AND THE MIRACLE DRUGS

by ALTON L. BLAKESLEE

THIS is a story of drama, mystery, pain, hope, frustration, and miracles. It's a story that directly concerns 30,000,000 or more Americans, the story of rheumatic diseases, the greatest cripplers of mankind.

These cripplers are arthritis, gout, rheumatic fever, and a host of allied ailments that affect joints and muscles. They claim 7,500,000 victims in this country, by medical estimate, and concern the families of each of these men, women, and children.

There are miracles and drama in new drugs—not cures—that bring bedridden, pain-wracked victims of arthritis bouncing out of bed temporarily, at least, in glorious pain-free movement.

There is mystery—why and how these and other drugs produce results—mystery even about what causes these diseases, and why some of them often disappear by themselves.

This pamphlet was prepared by Alton L. Blakeslee, science writer for the Associated Press, with the cooperation of the Arthritis and Rheumatism Foundation and the New York Academy of Medicine.

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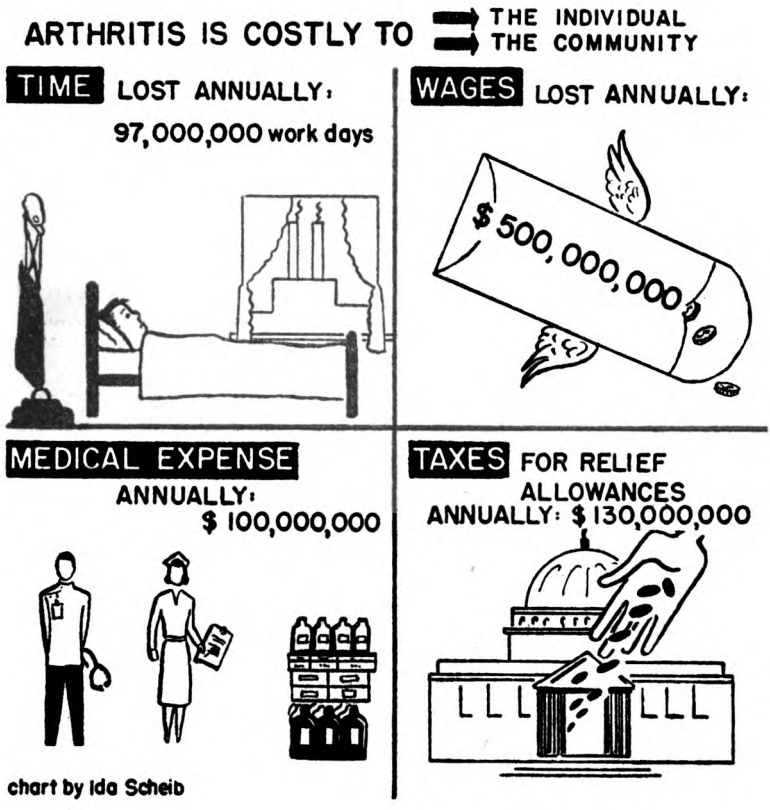
Of all who live beyond middle age, 97 per cent develop some changes of bones or joints characteristic of one form of arthritis. Arthritis and rheumatism alone cause the loss



of more than 97,000,000 work-days annually. It is estimated that $500,000,000 a year are lost to these people in wages, that they spend $100,000,000 a year in medical care, that relief allowances to aid them cost taxpayers $130,000,000 a year. Like many other illnesses, arthritis and rheumatism are commoner by far among families least able to afford sickness. Because they may last for years, they often impoverish even those who have modest savings.

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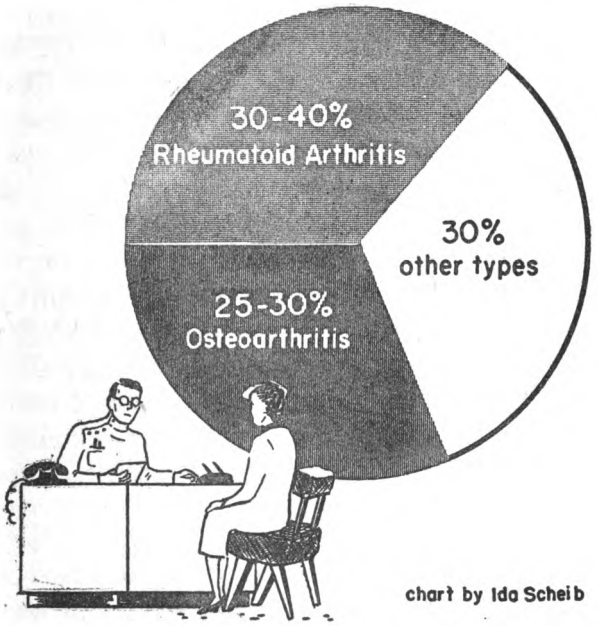

RHEUMATOID ARTHRITIS

SOMEWHERE between 1,000,000 and 2,000,000 Americans suffer from rheumatoid arthritis, in many ways the worst of the rheumatic cripplers. Eighty per cent of the cases occur between the ages of 25 and 50, and it usually starts between 35 and 40. Rheumatoid arthritis also afflicts children, and sometimes does not hit until after middle life. It is three times commoner among women than men.

Usually it starts in one joint, commonly in the small joints of the hands or feet, knees, ankles, elbows, and wrists. Sometimes slight joint swellings that come and go over a term of years are the first sign. Then it may burst forth to stay, for months or many years, affecting one or two joints or, usually, many in different parts of the body.

This type of arthritis is a chronic inflammation of the connective tissue of joints and their sheaths which bind

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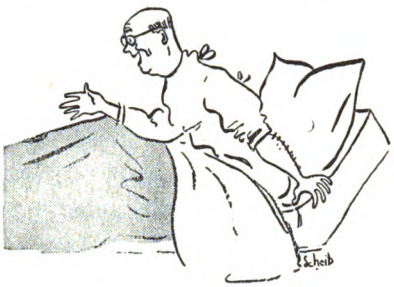
noticed. The relief from pain by the blood treatment sometimes comes on dramatically. One man had been unable to reach his bed blankets because of cruel arthritic pains.



Then one morning, after a number of transfusions, he not only reached the blankets, but got out of bed and walked down the hospital corridor. Later, the arthritis returned.

Something in the blood brought about this recovery. And researchers are trying to discover what it is.

Much more controversial is a double-shot treatment for rheumatoid arthritis which has been tried by a number of Swedish, English, and American physicians. This consists of an adrenal hormone called desoxycorticosterone plus the injection of Vitamin C. Neither the hormone preparation nor the vitamin itself does any good alone. Together, they seem to have worked in some cases. Another drug, Artisone, seems to have benefited some patients with rheumatoid arthritis. And some people with arthritis of the spine are said to have been helped by Pregnenolone, formed from cholesterol, a substance in butter and milk. Other researchers have been using large amounts of sex hormones, both male and female, and their patients benefited within four to twelve weeks. It isn't known how long the sex hormones can be used safely. Also just coming under study is a chemical named adenosine-5-monophosphate.

Although these new drugs have seemed promising in a few cases, authorities warn against placing false hope in them. The experience with these drugs in the hands of most people does not indicate that they will play an important role in the treatment of arthritis. The results do not begin to compare with those obtained from cortisone and ACTH.

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The wonder hormones do not bring relief from osteoarthritis nearly so often as from rheumatoid arthritis. The principal treatments are rest for the affected joints, relief of any stresses, as from overweight or bad posture or conditions that throw too much strain on the joints. Braces or splints often help. So do hot soaks, towels or heat lamp treatments, and massage. Aspirin and other pain-relieving drugs give some relief, and sometimes operations can correct the joint defects.

A good mental outlook is a great aid, plus the teaching of rules of relaxation and the solving of emotional conflicts. The worst thing is for a person to believe that nothing can be done, and that he is doomed to become a hopeless cripple. Much can be done, despite the mystery of osteoarthritis, and an optimistic outlook is part of the successful battle.

OTHER RHEUMATIC ILLS

Rheumatic Fever

Arthritis caused by rheumatic fever—the "rheumatism" feature of rheumatic fever—is one of the significant kinds of joint disease. In contrast with rheumatoid arthritis, it is most common in young people. But the great threat of rheumatic fever is its crippling or killing effects upon the heart. The arthritis of rheumatic fever nearly always clears up completely but the effects on the heart are usually permanent. The present theory is that rheumatic fever is caused by or follows a streptococcal infection.

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ARTHRITIS AND RHEUMATISM CHART

	who gets it?	how does it begin?	cause
Rheumatoid Arthritis	 more women than men - usually from 35-40 years old	 in small joints: ankles elbows wrists	uncertain
Osteoarthritis	 older people	 spine finger tips knees shoulders	old age wear
Arthritis from injuries and infections	 anyone	 where there is an injury, infection	injury infection
Rheumatic Fever	 children and young people	 heart pains, swelling in joints	streptococcal infection
Gout	 men over 30	 sporadic attacks	uncertain
Fibrositis	 anyone	 back	uncertain
Psychogenic Arthritis	 anyone	 muscles and tendons stiff and painful	emotional troubles: worry, grief, fear

Chart by Ida Scheib

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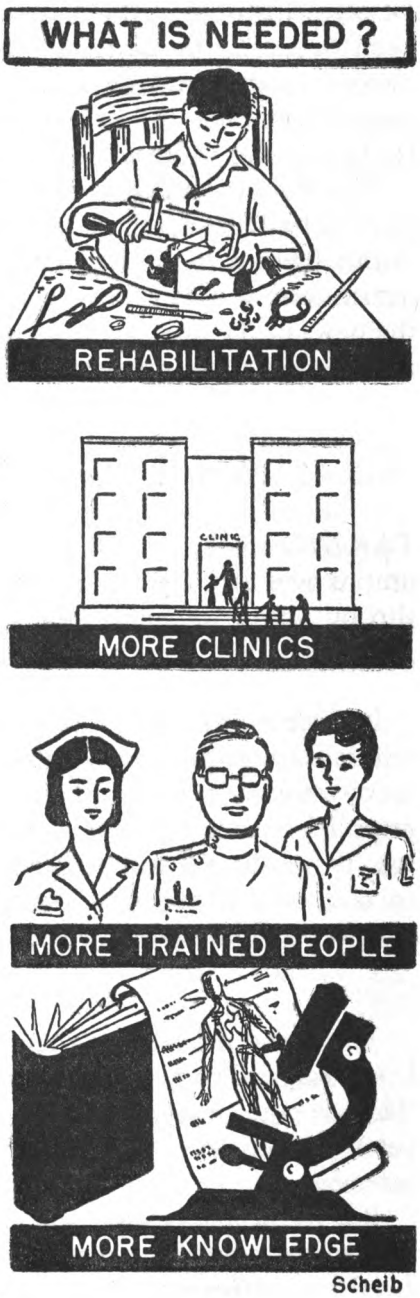
Foundation, in March, 1948. This organization has started annual campaigns to raise funds for research, for training specialists in arthritis, for telling the public the new story of arthritis, for care of the sick.

Private organizations have entered the battle also. An outstanding example is the Masonic Foundation for Medical Research and Human Welfare, established in 1947 by the Grand Lodge of Masons of New York City. Turning its attention to arthritis, it has established research centers in a number of New York State universities to seek some of the answers to these diseases.

The Public Health Service of the Federal Security Administration also is vitally interested in the rheumatic diseases. In past years federal funds had supplied fellowships for training in arthritis, but only in the amount of about $20,000 a year. An Arthritis and Metabolic



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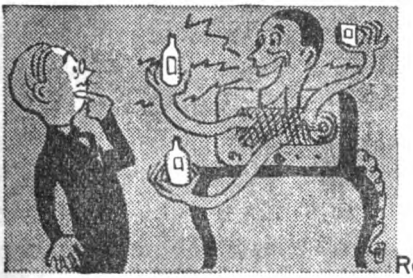
THINGS TO REMEMBER



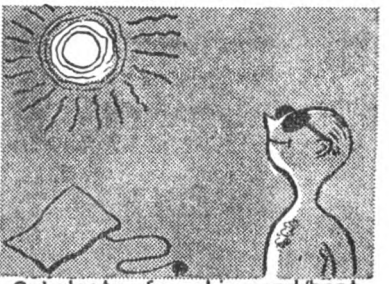
Avoid patent medicines



Rest and relax
-physically and mentally



Eat a well balanced diet



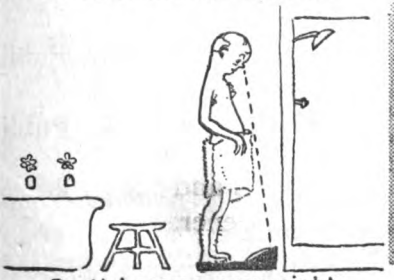
Get plenty of sunshine and heat



Do recommended exercises



Avoid cold, wet weather



Don't become overweight



Consult your physician

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