

# Drink, Not Malnutrition, Blamed for Heart Damage

Is it the chronic drinking or the malnutrition that goes along with drinking—that may lead to a subnormal heart function often associated with alcoholism?

Two reports presented at the 40th annual Scientific Sessions of the American Heart Association—one dealing with human alcoholics, the other with animal trials—say it's the alcohol that does the damage.

Dr. Timothy J. Regan, spokesman for a team of scientists from New Jersey College of Medicine in Jersey City, described studies in which the performance of the left ventricle, the heart's main pumping chamber, was measured in eleven alcoholics, ranging in age from 30 to 42, and chosen because they showed no signs of malnutrition or heart disease.

FIRST, THE investigators compared the heart function of the alcoholics with that of six "normals," when both groups were "stressed" with infusions of angiotensin. That agent raises blood pressure, which, in turn, places a greater pumping burden on the heart. The normal subjects' hearts were better able to adjust to this extra load—indicating a depressed ventricular function in the alcoholics.

Next, to evaluate the role of alcohol (ethanol) alone, the alcoholics were studied for four hours during which time they drank continually. Researchers noted a gradual decrease in stroke output (the amount of work done with each contraction) as alcohol ingestion progressed.

They also found an increasing concentration of various substances normally found inside the heart cells in the coronary blood, after its passage through the heart muscle. This apparent loss of cellular components (an enzyme called transaminase, potassium and phosphate ions) could be a sign of deteriorating heart function and may account for abnormal heart performance.

ASSOCIATED in the study with Dr. Regan were Drs. Gilbert E. Levinson, Martin J. Frank, Sanskriti K. Anand, and Christos E. Moschos, attending the Scientific

Sessions from the Los Angeles area are cardiologists Dr. Robert W. Oblath, president of the Los Angeles County Heart Association, Dr. Egrotis Miller, Dr. Eugene Temkin, Dr. Williard J. Zinn, Dr. Marvin Rosenberg, and Dr. Walter S. Graf.

In a report delivered at another session, a team of researchers at Albany Medical College told of feeding two groups of rats a liquid diet adequate in all known nutrients for normal growth and nutrition.

ONE GROUP also was given an alcohol comparable to the intake of the human alcoholics for as long as five months. The main effects of the alcohol, Dr. Harold B. Bishop and her colleagues observed, was to impair the ability of the heart to beat as forcefully as a normal heart. The

researchers also saw cellular changes in the heart tissue of the alcohol-fed rats which may be characteristic of evolving heart disease.

The hearts of the alcoholic rats also were found to be less responsive to substances like norepinephrine, the so-called "stress" hormones, which, among other things, work to step up heart function.

Co-authors with Dr. Bishop were Drs. Ira Rosenblum, Jack N. P. Davies, and Arthur A. Stein.

## Bank Executive to Judge Citizen-of-Month Program

John M. (Jack) Heidt, regional vice president of Union Bank, has been named a judge of the Citizen-of-the-Month awards program, according to a spokesman for Great Lakes Properties, Inc., sponsors of the awards program.

Heidt has been in charge of Union Bank's Torrance office since May, 1966. He joined the bank in 1968 as a management trainee and became a vice president in 1965.

Active in community affairs, he is a member of the Los Angeles Club, the Torrance Club, the Torrance Chamber of Commerce, and the Torrance Rotary Club.

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