Medico-Legal

DEATH FROM TOXAMIA AFTER BLOOD TRANSFUSION

[FROM OUR MEDICO-LEGAL CORRESPONDENT]

At the adjourned inquest held on January 28 before the coroner for the Borough of Southend the cause of the death of Raymond Lawrence Webb was found to be toxemia due to infected blood being given in the course of transfusion.

Webb, a turrett lathe operator, aged 26, entered Southend General Hospital on October 28, 1951, for an operation for the excision of haemorrhoids. The operation was performed on October 29, and on November 8 and 10 he had haemorrhages, after which he was given five transfusions in all. On November 18 his fourth transfusion was stopped, after half a pint had been given, because of nausea. The blood was cultured and was found to be sterile.

On November 21 it was decided to give him one more transfusion before he went home. After one-third of the bottle had been given he showed a reaction of rigor, nausea, vomiting, and a rise of temperature. The transfusion was therefore stopped. Some of the blood was returned to the laboratory and the group checked and found to be correct for the patient. The remainder was left in the bottle, which inadvertently was left un corked. Later the patient complained of pain and suffered from incontinence. On examination his pulse was weak, he had a temperature, and was restless and perspiring. Anti-shock and other treatment was given, but he died that evening at about 8 p.m.

As a result of the evidence of peripheral circulatory failure and toxemia which he found at necropsy, Dr. J. W. Lacey, pathologist of St. John’s Hospital, Chelmsford, carried out a bacteriological examination of the blood and sputum. Histological examination of the internal organs had shown the presence of a large number of Gram-negative bacilli in the sputum only. The further examination of sputum and blood showed the presence of a Gram-negative rod identified as an intermediate form of the coli-aerogenes group. This is not a normal inhabitant of the intestinal tract, although it can occur there, and is more commonly met in soil, water, and dust.

Dr. Lacey confirmed that the toxemia was due to infected blood. There was no evidence of how the infection occurred, but in his view the three possibilities were that the citrate solution into which the blood was taken had been incompletely sterilized, or that the bottle was infected during the process of taking the blood, or that it was infected when opened for cross-matching in the laboratory, if it was so opened before use. Dr. Caldwell, of the Southend General Hospital, said that nearly 700 transfusions a year were given at the hospital, and this was the first fatality for six years.

Universities and Colleges

UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

Sir Russell Brain, President of the Royal College of Physicians of London, has been elected to an Honorary Fellowship of New College.

Keith Broden Taylor has been elected to a Radcliffe Travelling Fellowship.

Dr. W. Ritchie Russell has been re-elected a member of the board of studies for psychology for two years from the first day of Michaelmas Term, 1952.

UNIVERSITY OF GLASGOW

The following degrees were conferred on April 26:

M.D.—J. H. Bell, R. M. Gibson, Mabel E. Mitchell, Mary D. Smith.

*With high commendation. *With commendation.

UNIVERSITY OF DUBLIN

SCHOOL OF PHYSIC, TRINITY COLLEGE

The following candidates have been approved at the examination indicated:


The following awards are announced: Dr. Henry Hutchinson Stewart Second Medical Year Scholarship and Daniel John Cunningham Memorial Medal and Prize, A. W. C. Stewart. Dr. Henry Hutchinson Stewart Second Medical Year Prize. Dr. Alan Holmes. Additional Dr. Henry Hutchinson Stewart Second Medical Year Prize, I. J. Templer. John Meller Purser Medal, J. A. Scott.

UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

The following scholarships at the Royal Free Hospital School of Medicine have been awarded for 1952-3: A. M. Bird Entrance Scholarship (£40 a year for six years), M. Charlesworth, Appleby Grammar School, Westmorland. Mabel Sharman-Crawford Scholarship (£40 a year for four years), Miss E. M. Palmer, Fairfield High School, Droylsden, Manchester. Sir Owen Roberts Memorial Scholarship (£65 a year for four years), Miss E. M. Newland, Norwood Technical College. Elizabeth Garrett Anderson Scholarship (£40 a year for four years), Miss G. C. Smith, Royal Free Hospital School of Medicine. Lewis, R. M. Purse, and Lieutenant Allan Lewis, R.N.A.S., Memorial Scholarship (£60 a year for four years), Miss K. M. Howard, Royal Free Hospital School of Medicine. A. M. Bird Scholarship for Clinical Studies (£40 a year for three years), Miss E. H. Shaw, Royal Free Hospital School of Medicine.

UNIVERSITY OF BRISTOL

The following candidates have been approved at the examination indicated:

DIPLOMA IN MEDICAL RADIODIAGNOSIS.—Part II: D. C. R. Button, W. A. Copland, Lien Chuan Yew.

ROYAL COLLEGE OF OBSTRICIANS AND GYNECOLOGISTS


At a meeting of the Council of the College held recently a further grant of £3,000 was received from the Leverhulme Foundation, to be awarded for research in obstetrics and gynaecology.