THIRD INTERNATIONAL CANCER CONGRESS

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THE Third International Cancer Congress, held under the auspices of the International Union against Cancer, met in Atlantic City, New Jersey, U.S.A., during September 11-15, 1939, under the presidency of Prof. Francis Carter Wood of Columbia University.

Unfortunately the onset of war prevented many of the European delegates from attending, and Sénateur Justin Godart, president of the International Union against Cancer, felt that he could not leave Franco. A few English delegates, among them Dr. William Cramer of the Imperial Cancer Research Fund of London, were able to remain. Considerable delegations came from South America and Mexico, and Prof. R. Kinoshita represented the Japanese Government. The total attendance was more than four hundred, and approximately the same number of papers were read.

A special feature was a group of evening lectures which presented general surveys of various aspects of the cancer problem and were prepared with the purpose of interesting not only the specialist but also the entire audience. In these lectures the subject of genetic susceptibility to tumour formation in mice was surveyed by Dr. C. C. Little of Bar Harbor, Maine. Dr. A. Lacassagne of Paris presented the relationship of hormones and mammary adenocarcinoma in the mouse, and, as he was unable to be present, his paper was read by the chairman. The paper of Profs. Kennaway and Cook, also read in their absence, dealt with the chemical compounds as carcinogenic agents, and Dr. William Cramer of the Imperial Cancer Research Fund spoke on some phases of the etiology of human cancer. Another interesting evening lecture was that on "Cancer and the Public Health" by Surgeon-General Thomas Parran of the United States Public Health Service. A scheme for the organization of a cancer clinic, with the methods of recording the facts concerning patients and the mechanical sorting of the cards on which records are kept so as to obtain the desired statistics within a short period, was presented by Prof. Fred J. Hodges of the University of Michigan. Recent advances in cancer surgery were discussed by Dr. Frank H. Lahey of Boston; and Prof. James Ewing of New York, under the title of "Cancer, Present and Future", summarized the main features of the Congress and indicated the direction in which research might proceed in the future. The evening lectures were exceedingly well attended not only by the members of the Congress, but also by the local medical fraternity, who desired to obtain the latest information on progress in the investigation and treatment of cancer.

Papers were presented in the following Sections: Biophysics; Surgery; Therapeutic Radiology; Statistics and Education; Genetics; General Pathology; Experimental Pathology; Diagnostic Roentgenology; and a General Section for those titles that could not be included elsewhere or were received too late.

The Section on Biophysics included studies on the relation between concentration of ionization and the biological effect; the comparative action of X-rays and neutrons; a comparison of biological and physical measurements of X-rays produced at voltages from 200 to 1,000 kv.; the action of radiation on protoplasm, and the effects of X-rays on different viruses and genes.

In the Section on General Pathology there was an interesting series of papers on the relation between treatment with oestrogenic compounds and the tissue changes produced. Two of the authors believe that the administration of these substances in physiological doses or even in fairly excessive amounts cannot be held responsible for the production of malignant tumours in man, thus differing from the results obtained on animals by Lacassagne, Strong, and others, in which a carcinogenic effect, though perhaps not rigidly proved, is strongly suggested. Important papers were read in this section on tumours of the central nervous system, including one on brain tumours induced in mice by methylcholanthrene. Another communication was that by Martland on the occurrence of cancer in persons who have received considerable quantities of radioactive substances either for therapeutic purposes or accidentally as in various industrial processes. Other papers dealt with tumours of the ovary, pancreas, and parathyroid.

The Section on Experimental Pathology had a very large number of papers and of such variety that every phase of cancer research was included, with a full discussion of the recent studies on leukaemia in animals and the correlations between this disease and human leukaemia, the possible relationship of viruses to cancer, and other questions.

Sessions of great interest to practising physicians and surgeons were the combined symposia of the Sections on Surgery and Therapeutic Radiology, with prolonged discussions on the value of pre- and post-operative radiation in the treatment of cancer of the breast, the proper method of handling node involvements occurring with cancer of the oral cavity, and similar problems which, since they have to be studied statistically on human beings, cannot yet be regarded as settled, because of the lack of extensive statistical records of patients treated in different ways.

The remainder of the programme was devoted to papers on roentgenological diagnosis, genetics, education and statistics, and other clinical and experimental investigations.

Owing to the present situation, it was impossible for the Executive Committee of the International Union against Cancer to make any decision as to the place of meeting for the next Congress. The delegates from South America, however, gave a very cordial invitation to the officers urging the suitability of Buenos Aires for the Fourth International Cancer Congress in 1942.