BOOK REVIEWS

Investigations on the Relations of Rheumatoid Arthritis and Rheumatic Fever to Allergy.

By Klaus A. J. Järvinen. III. Medical Clinic, University of Helsinki. 1950.

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This thesis from Professor Holsti's clinic in Helsinki University performs a very useful function. It examines the interrelations between rheumatoid arthritis, rheumatic fever, and allergy, using the patients attending over 14 years at the Medical Clinic in Helsinki.

Patients	No. of Cases	Per cent. Asthma	Per cent. Rheumatoid arthritis	Per cent. Rheumatic fever
Rheumatoid arthritis ..	1,008	0.69 ± 0.26	100	—
Rheumatic fever	685	0.58 ± 0.29	—	100
Asthma	563	100	1.20 ± 0.46	3.90 ± 0.81
Controls (typhoid, para-typhoid and gastroenteritis)	748	0.53 ± 0.27	0.94 ± 0.35	4.90 ± 0.79

There seemed to be no correlation between the incidence of rheumatoid arthritis, rheumatic fever, and asthma. Where asthma occurred in a patient with rheumatoid arthritis (seven cases) or rheumatic fever (six cases), an amelioration of the rheumatoid arthritis with asthma or of the asthma with rheumatic fever was noted—detailed case histories are quoted and it appears plain that where by chance these diseases occur in the same person they have a profound effect on each other; the symptoms show alteration. In the more severe cases of rheumatoid arthritis and also of rheumatic fever, the eosinophil count in the peripheral blood was significantly lower. Thus, in this respect, there is no resemblance to the allergic diseases.

Disease	Eosinophils/c.mm.	
	Mild	Severe
Rheumatoid arthritis	183 ± 8	61 ± 11
Rheumatic fever	141 ± 13	42 ± 7

In contradistinction to the allergic diseases the administration of various antihistamine drugs in high dosage made the symptoms of rheumatoid arthritis and rheumatic fever worse rather than better.

The author suggests that the rheumatoid arthritis and rheumatic fever cases show sympathicotonia and a low histamine sensitivity: the asthma cases show vagotonia and a high histamine sensitivity. States producing an increase in sympathicotonia tend to improve allergic disease and exacerbate rheumatism and *vice versa*.

Although the theoretical portion of this thesis is somewhat tenuous, the clinical observations and the figures of incidence are of very great interest. It was observations of a somewhat similar nature on pregnancy effects in rheumatoid arthritis that led Hench to the discovery of the effects of cortisone.

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