

# Area to receive genetic disease aid

Financial aid to help combat genetic diseases has been assured for the Buffalo area through a statewide grant awarded under terms of the newly adopted National Genetic Diseases Act.

The funding for this area, estimated at about \$25,000, will be channeled through the Division of Medical Genetics at the State University at Buffalo to expand service activities.

The Genetic Diseases Act was recently adopted by Congress to provide support for screening, diagnosis and treatment of genetic diseases and counseling services.

The federal funds appropriated were offered on a statewide basis. New York State's application, in competition with other states, was drawn up by geneticists from throughout the state. The statewide grant amounts to more than \$300,000 for the first year's activities.

One of the problems encountered in setting up the state

proposal was the coordination of the needs of the New York City area, well supplied with relatively sophisticated genetic centers, and Upstate New York, where population is more thinly spread and where genetic services are confined mainly to the larger cities. Cooperation was achieved through a statewide advisory council, which included consumer representatives.

Two of the members of the executive committee which formulated the state proposal are UB geneticists Dr. Robert Guthrie and Dr. Robin M. Bannerman.

Dr. Guthrie devised the Guthrie test for the early detection of phenylketonuria, or PKU, in the newborn. The test, now in use world-wide, has led to the effective treatment of children who might otherwise have become mentally retarded.

The new grant will provide support for Dr. Guthrie's laboratory on the Main Street campus for special statewide

diagnostic services related to mental retardation.

Dr. Bannerman heads UB's Division of Medical Genetics, which provides clinical services at both Children's Hospital in Buffalo and Buffalo General Hospital. Dr. Bannerman observed that the additional funding would be "of great value" in expanding genetic diseases services in Western New York.

In terms of disease prevention, Dr. Bannerman added, the funding should prove highly cost-effective. His observation was related to an estimate by the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare that the lifetime cost of maintaining a seriously afflicted genetic patient, assuming institutionalization, amounts to approximately \$250,000.

Many types of birth defects are caused by inherited, or genetic, diseases which are attributed to malfunctioning genes and chromosomes in body cells.

# Gonorrhea, syphilis again on the rise

ATLANTA (UPI) — The effort to control gonorrhea and syphilis in the United States has run into formidable obstacles and both diseases, which last year were on the downswing, are now rising again, a federal health official said today.

"We're at a critical juncture," said Dr. Paul J. Weisner, head of the venereal disease control division of the national Center for Disease Control, which coordinates federal, state

and local efforts against syphilis and gonorrhea. "We're certainly worried about it," he said. "The focal increases are not occurring everywhere, but we certainly can't ignore it."

A year ago the CDC reported a 15.2 percent drop in the number of cases of primary and secondary syphilis compared to the previous year. The number of gonorrhea cases showed a 1.1 percent reduction, a

small drop percentage-wise but significant because known cases of the disease were well over the million mark.

In the first 43 weeks of this year, there have been 837,110 reported cases of gonorrhea. This compares with 826,846 cases for the same number of weeks in 1977, a 1.2 percent increase.

Syphilis cases jumped from 17,013 for the first 43 weeks of 1977 to 17,790 this year, a 4.6 percent hike.

Weisner said that for every five cases brought to the attention of health officials, another two cases are not reported.

Weisner attributed the setback in the battle against syphilis and gonorrhea to several factors, one of them the "taxpayers' revolt" in several states that has reduced state and local money going to public health clinics.

Although the federal government continues to appropriate \$32 million annually in state and local grants to fight syphilis and gonorrhea, Weisner said "public health disease clinics are closing all over the place."

# Tests don't confirm powers

By ROBERT MUSEL LONDON (UPI) — Professor John Taylor was so impressed at a performance by psychic Uri Geller of apparent psychic metal bending that he insisted whatever powers were involved were worthy of scientific investigation.

Three years after what New Scientist magazine called his "gullible endorsement", the Kings College mathematician has reported that experiments have failed to confirm abnormal powers in faith healers, dowers, metal benders and other psychics.

Taylor's long research, published in Nature magazine, was based on the theory that only electromagnetic (EM) radiation could account for abnormal effects and if it was absent, it had to be assumed there was no extrasensory perception (ESP) taking place. In other words, alleged ESP in the absence of EM must be viewed with suspicion.

For example, in one test, subjects managed to deflect a needle suspended in a Perspex cylinder by a fine thread. There was no EM registered at the time. When an anti-static ointment was rubbed over the cylinder the effect disappeared showing it was induced from outside.

Reexamination found that the subjects had inadvertently touched the cylinder creating static which induced charges on the needle and gave the appearance of psychokinesis — the movement of an object without physical contact.

Since Taylor was sharply criticized by New Scientist as "the man who more than any other established the credibility of Uri Geller", his metal bending experiments were of major interest.

He said he conducted 268 trials with 68 subjects under four sets of conditions. The first three involved sensitive instruments to guard against faking and no metal bending at all resulted.

Tests without instruments, constituting the "more relaxed environment" requested by some of the subjects, did produce some bending but Taylor could not detect any electromagnetic. Nor was there any EM present

when faith healers attempted cures by laying on of hands or when telepathists or distant-viewers — who profess to be able to describe a distant site without being there — were tested.

"Nor," said Taylor, "did the tests show evidence of the subjects being successful in telepathic transmissions."

Taylor said some effects were noted among dowers — who claim to be able to find water — and faith healers, but these had natural explanations. Dowers, he claimed, are responding by muscular twitches to subconscious mental activity and faith healers have a psychological effect on their patients.

In the case of metal bending he said:

"There is no known mechanism in the body to achieve a peak power output of gigawatts (the level he believes necessary for metal bending). It is difficult to suppose that this would be possible without severe tissue damage."

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# Questions

**Q. Will the formerly vacant lot on Eighth Avenue, presently used by DJH Construction Co. for equipment and storage, be left vacant after all the sewer work has been done? Richard L. Lichoroblec, North Tonawanda**

**A.** According to Second Ward Alderman Paul Kudla, the lot will be leveled off and the sidewalk replaced as soon as the construction company is through with sewer installations—probably next May or June.

**Q. I have a photo from the Tonawanda NEWS I would like to frame and hang. Is there any way I can preserve the clipping so it doesn't fade? C.A.M.**

**A.** If you really want to preserve the clipping from the paper, it will take some effort. The problem with newspaper paper is the amount of acid in it, so you have to de-acidify the paper, then add alkalies with buffers. Then mount the clipping with non-acidic backing (don't use a corn starch-base glue). To really keep it, it must be put in a dark cold place, such as your freezer.

Daniel Killian, director of the North Tonawanda Public Library, has a pamphlet from the Library of Congress elaborating on the procedure on file. You may write to the Library of Congress, attention assistant director for preservation, Administrative Department, Washington, D.C. 20540, for a copy.

Unfortunately, the above-mentioned

procedure does not include framing and hanging your clipping.

**Q. Regarding the article about residents of Tonawanda, North Tonawanda shoveling out fire hydrants after they are plowed over: In my hometown (Oneida, N.Y.) the paid firemen used to go out in their own cars and shovel out the fire hydrants. Robert G. Ahrens, Tonawanda**

**A.** The NEWS story said nothing about residents shoveling. North Tonawanda's superintendent of the Department of Public Works, Victor Fulmines, said placing a long stick along side buried hydrants would help firemen locate hydrants in case of emergency. Tonawanda paid and volunteer firemen said they shovel out hydrants, but appreciate it when homeowners do the chore for them.

**Q. Where can I purchase a governor for a 1974 Dodge? R.A., Buffalo.**

**A.** You failed to specify if the part is for a Dodge car or truck and whether the governor is for the transmission or the engine. Contact the parts department of any Dodge dealer. They will either have one for you or tell you where you can get one. Also, try the junk yards, listed in the telephone directory under "Automobile-Wreckers."