

Abstracts from Current Literature

General

EXHAUSTION IN THE YOUNG BUSINESS EXECUTIVE. SIDNEY A. PORTIS, M.D., IRVING H. ZITMAN, M.D. and CHARLES H. LAWRENCE, M.D., J. A. M. A. **144**:1162 (Dec. 2) 1950.

The authors state that for many years they have seen young business executives in their early forties and fifties who complained of becoming utterly exhausted. These patients started in their jobs with zest and enthusiasm but succumbed to manifest disabilities at an age when they should have been most productive. The problem of exhaustion was studied by comparing 50 business executives under the age of 50 who came seeking medical advice with 50 similar executives who were referred to the authors for periodic examinations. It was found that 60 per cent of the group having self-initiated examinations complained of fatigue. Of the fatigued group, 43.3 per cent had a more rapid disappearance of blood sugar after the three hour intravenous dextrose tolerance test, in other words, a relative hypoglycemia. Such relative hypoglycemia possibly results from overstimulation of the islet cells of the pancreas mediated by the parasympathetic nervous system via the vagi. Blocking of the vagi with atropine resulted in elimination of the drop of blood sugar. Careful psychological studies were also made on this group of executives.

In the group of executives undergoing routine examinations, the emotional status was evaluated along with the results of the physical examination. Of the whole group examined, only 5.4 per cent were considered entirely free of physical defects and asymptomatic organic disease was surprisingly high. Only 10.9 per cent of this group complained of fatigue.

The authors feel that all too often the person whose occupation is sedentary and primarily mental does not have good eating habits. An inadequate breakfast or an unbalanced, hurried luncheon was found to be common in this group. Cigaret chain smoking is also considered to be a factor, since tobacco tends to raise the blood sugar level and when this is long continued the blood sugar level becomes depleted and a relative hypoglycemia results.

To stabilize the disordered carbohydrate metabolism, atropine and phenobarbital are suggested, to be taken throughout the twenty-four hour period. Fatigue is in part a manifestation of a psychosomatic problem. The physician should discuss this aspect of the problem with the patient or, if untrained, should refer him to a psychiatrist. A diet is suggested, including both foods to be consumed and foods to be avoided. In summary the authors state that life situations play an important role leading to exhaustion in executives, and both a dietary and a pharmacologic approach to the therapy of exhaustion are suggested.

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MEASUREMENT OF WORK-LIFE EXPECTANCY. S. L. WOLFBEIN, Month. Labor Rev. **71**:193 (Aug.) 1950.

Tables of the working life of men have been developed in the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics. A detailed description of these tables and an analysis of the pattern of working life derived from them is presented in the Bureau of Labor Statistics Bulletin no. 1081, which will be reviewed in a future issue of the *Digest*. This paper discusses the general implications of the report. With the increase in life expectancy and the adoption of a retirement age, the average man can expect 5.7 years of retirement, which is double the expectation in 1940. By 1960 the period will be accordingly longer; this is the nub of the problem of old age dependency. The tables also have their applications to the young. The life work span varies greatly in different industries, and the tables show in which the labor force is predominantly young or old. Comparisons are also made between rural and urban workers and between races. Rural workers begin earlier and retire later than the urban; nonwhite men begin earlier and leave work earlier. The length and the pattern of working life are constantly changing. A future volume will present similar statistics for women.

ADAPTATION OF INDUST. HYG. DIGEST. ABSTRACT.