

MDs Raise Hope For Rheumatism, Arthritis Victims

Four Physicians Air Methods Of Averting, Easing Illnesses Without Use of 'Miracle' Drugs

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There is more hope for rheumatic and arthritic patients than most people realize, a panel of four Pittsburgh doctors said yesterday, and they suggested ways of averting the crippling illnesses.

The doctors spoke at the Penn-Sheraton Hotel last night at an open forum on arthritis and rheumatism. In interviews before the meeting, they told how the various forms of arthritis and rheumatism are affected by exercise, drugs, aging, rest and prolonged labor.

Says Treatment Effective

The panelists were Dr. H. M. Margolis, medical director of the Arthritis and Rheumatism Foundation, which sponsored the forum; Dr. James H. Barr, assistant medical director of the foundation; Dr. Margaret J. Maclachlan, assistant professor of medicine at the University of Pittsburgh, and Thomas D. Brower, associate professor of orthopedic surgery at Pitt.

Dr. Margolis said that at least 15 per cent of all persons with rheumatoid arthritis, including those hardest hit, can recover completely. He said the disease, which involves painful swelling of the joints, responds so well to "conservative" methods of treatment that doctors don't use the so-called "wonder drugs" (such as cortisone) except as a last resort.

"Conservative" treatment, he said, includes skillful use of physical therapy, rest, full dose of aspirin and prevention of deformity by heat and splinting. The hardest-hit patients, he said, receive injections of gold along with other therapy.

"During the last 10 years," Dr. Margolis said, "we've learned so much about these techniques that we only turn to cortisone as a last resort." He noted that cortisone has harmful side effects if it is given in the doses needed to give complete remission.

What about exercise for normal, healthy people? Are sedentary workers who do pushups and take 20-mile hikes more likely to get arthritis in later years than those who do not?

Describe Bone Aging

Here's what the doctors said:

The ends of your bones are covered by a tough elastic tissue or cartilage which begins to fray and chip off as you get older. By the time you're 60 or 70 years old much of



Dr. H. M. MARGOLIS

Lauds improved therapy.

susceptible to degenerative changes in the back and hip bones.

But this doesn't mean they should give up exercise, the doctors said, nor does it mean that you should avoid it. The whole answer, they pointed out, lies in realizing that one man's exercise may be another man's strain. The amount you should start with and the amount your next-door neighbor should start with may be entirely different.

Use common sense, they advised, and when in doubt consult your doctor.

What's the best way to avoid arthritis? The doctors pointed out that the causes of the disease are not fully understood, but they gave three tips:

► Don't let yourself get too heavy, as this puts an unnecessary load on your knees, ankles and hips.

► Exercise regularly according to your needs.

► Eat a well-balanced diet.

The doctors cautioned against "fad" diets represented as arthritis cures. Most such diets, they said, do more harm than good.