

# Cause, Cure of Multiple Sclerosis Still Mystery

By K. H. Sutherland, M.D., County Health Officer

One of the most mysterious of all major disorders affecting the central nervous system is multiple sclerosis.

A chronic, usually progressive and crippling disease of the nerves and spinal cord, MS strikes chiefly persons between 20 and 40 years of age.

It is typically slow and insidious in onset, frequently difficult for physicians to diagnose until its victims have reached the point of extensive disability.

The cause of this disease is not known. There is no specific diagnostic test to detect multiple sclerosis; nei-

er is there a specific treatment for it.

THE NATIONAL Multiple Sclerosis Society estimates that at least a quarter million people suffer from this disease in the United States. Because about two-thirds of the sufferers are in the ages of young adulthood, the tragedy of multiple sclerosis disrupts the lives of many thousands of others who are the spouses, children and parents of the afflicted persons.

Multiple sclerosis strikes people from all walks of life, men and women alike. No occupational, economic or racial group seems to be

more susceptible than another to MS.

In multiple sclerosis there are many areas of the brain and spinal cord in which myelin — a fatty sheath which in normal healthy individuals covers the nerve fibers — has been dissolved or destroyed.

THE PROCESS by which this dissolution or destruction is accomplished is not known, but it causes either a disturbance of the nerve impulses causing paralysis or a disturbance of function of the parts of the body activated by these nerves.

It is "multiple" both in the sense that it attacks several

areas of the body at once and that it frequently returns after a period of improvement. It is "sclerotic" because it leaves sclera, or scars, at the points where loss of the protective covering of the nerves takes place.

Common symptoms of MS include double vision, staggering and inability to keep one's balance as in drunkenness, numbness of parts of the body, tremor, uncontrollable movements of the eyeballs, extreme weakness, speech difficulties, emotional disturbances and bladder trouble.

ALTHOUGH there is no specific treatment for the dis-

ease itself, patients often may be benefited by methods employed to relieve symptoms and improve general health. In the greater Los Angeles region, in addition to care provided by physicians in private practice, there are six specialized clinics sponsored by the Multiple Sclerosis Society to provide these services.

In the final analysis, however, it is medical research which holds the greatest hope of solving the riddle of multiple sclerosis and of relieving the toll of human misery accompanying this disease.

Free booklets about this illness and information con-

cerning MS clinics are available from the Southern California Chapter of the National Multiple Sclerosis Society, 622 S. Kenmore Ave., Los Angeles, Cal. 90005, telephone DUnkirk 8-0461.

## Explosive Causes Damage in Park

About \$35 damage was done last week by vandals who put an explosive in a toilet bowl in the men's rest room at El Retiro Park. The explosion shattered the bowl, police said. A park custodian discovered the damage in the rest rooms which are operated 24 hours.

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