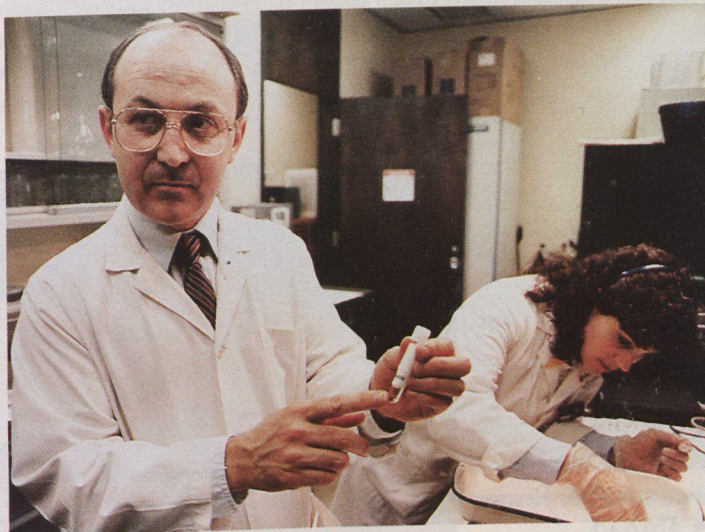


Solving the mystery of MS

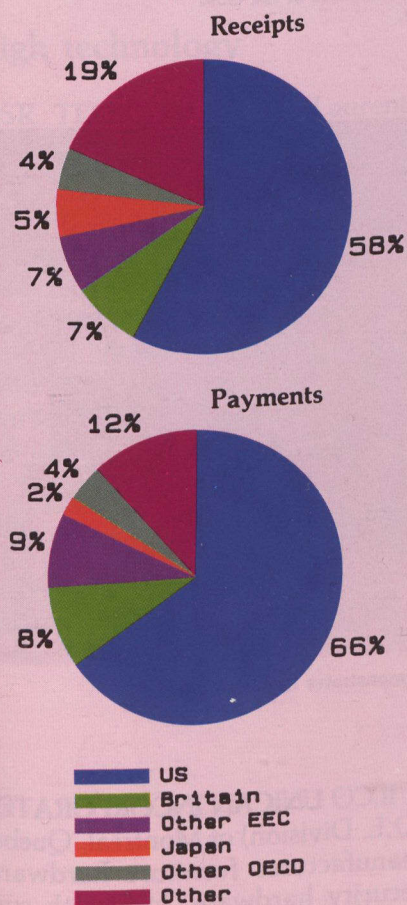
accounting for the largest growth. Consulting and professional services have also grown rapidly since 1977 when Canada became a net exporter of these services.

Other measures of importance to Canada that were accepted by the delegates in Uruguay include curbing barriers to trade-related investment and reducing piracy of copyrighted and patented material. The agreement also contains numerous items recognizing the need for greater economic development in Third World nations, including a commitment to extending GATT rules to textiles and clothing ■



Dr. Ken Warren continues research in the fight against multiple sclerosis.

Trade in services*: 1984



*Includes: travel, freight and shipping, business services and other transactions.

An antibody that may be an important step in halting the progress of multiple sclerosis, a disease that causes people to lose control of their muscles, has been discovered by researchers at the University of Alberta in Edmonton.

Neurologist Ken Warren and chemist Ingrid Catz, who have been involved in researching the disease for some eight years, have found an antibody called anti-myelin basic protein which Dr. Warren said was clearly associated with the disease. "The more antibody present the greater is the amount of disease activity," he said. Similarly, when the disease goes into remission, as it spontaneously does from time to time in most victims, the antibody disappears from the spinal fluid.

Multiple sclerosis, which affects about 135 out of every 100 000 Canadians, involves the progressive destruction of the myelin sheath — the insulation wrapped around nerve cells like those in the spinal cord — and eventually of the nerve cells themselves.

The myelin sheath contains a number of proteins, including one called myelin basic protein. Drs. Warren and Catz discovered the anti-myelin basic protein attached to the insulation around the nerve cells in people with multiple sclerosis by tracing chemicals internally using radio isotopes.

Dr. Warren said that, while the antibody had been the subject of speculation and laboratory work before, it had never clearly been identified in repeated trials. He has cautioned, however, that the discovery cannot be considered a "breakthrough" in the fight against multiple sclerosis and "significant advances" could still be a decade away.

Even if the antibody proves significant it can only be used to stop the progress of the disease rather than as a cure. "The repairing mechanism of the central nervous system is not great," he said.

Further research at the University of Alberta is expected to centre on proving whether or not the antibody is actually involved in the disease mechanism and finding out what makes it disappear from time to time ■