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PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE

Subject.....Dr. George Crile.....Cleveland Clinic

Date.....January 8, 1943

SCIENCE LEADER
DR. CRILE DIES
IN CLEVELANDCo-Founder of Famous
Clinic Won Honors
in Wartime Surgery

Cleveland, Jan. 7 (AP).—Dr. George Crile, famed 78-year-old surgeon-scientist, who believed he performed the first direct blood transfusion, died today after receiving 25 of them in recent weeks. Subacute bacterial endocarditis, a growth of germs which blocked the heart valves, caused death. His physician, Dr. Charles Hartsock, added that Dr. Crile had been confined to Cleveland Clinic since Nov. 11, more than a month longer than was known previously.

The internationally known scientist spent more than 50 years in research on the nature of life and the loss of energy that attended death, studies which brought new surgical methods and medical theories. He was injured returning from a research trip two years ago when an airliner plunged into a Florida swamp, but recovered from double pneumonia and other ailments to resume his work at the clinic, which he helped found.

Concerned with preserving the natural function of organs, Dr. Crile successfully "shocked" nerves by anesthesia to prevent surgical shock.

Because of his success with goitre surgery, he often was referred to as a specialist in this branch. It was estimated he removed 25,000 goitres.

Cleveland Clinic World Famous.

His interest in surgery lay chiefly in the desire to test findings of the research laboratory, although he worked with the patient as his ultimate objective.

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"The clinic," he once said, "is the cradle of the research laboratory." To the Cleveland Clinic, of which he was co-founder, surgeons from all parts of the world journeyed to observe and discuss his methods. Disaster visited the clinic on May 15, 1929, when fire, laboratory explosions and poisonous fumes from burning X-ray films killed 124 patients and employees.

In the Spanish-American war of 1898 he was brigade surgeon with the rank of major, 2nd Army Corps, in Cuba and Puerto Rico. At the outbreak of the first Great War a plan for American university hospital units was started and Crile organized the first one at Western Reserve. With him as director, it sailed for Neuilly, France, Dec. 28, 1914, serving until April 1, 1915, when it was replaced by the Harvard unit.

When America went into the conflict, Crile scored another "first" when he organized the Lakeside unit, afterwards known as Base Hospital No. 4 of the United States Army. A bronze tablet at Rouses commemorates the work of the Lakeside unit. Its organizer received the Distinguished Service Medal of the United States in 1919, was made an honorary member of the military division, Companion of the Bath, by England in 1919, and chevalier of the French Legion of Honor in 1922.

After the war Crile and two colleagues, Drs. Frank E. Buntis and William E. Lower, conceived the idea of the Cleveland Clinic. Crile was born in Chilli, O., Nov. 11, 1864, the son of Michael and Margaret Deeds Crile. He was christened "George Washington," but dropped the middle name in later years.

Acid-Alkali Balance.

In his research in blood chemistry he discovered the vital significance of an acid-alkali balance in an organism. His finding was clinically important because it showed that positive acidity is established when death occurs.

He noticed that in death the loss of energy was a constant factor. Under his scalpel and microscope went the organs and tissues and cells of more than 2,000 animals in the course of a long quest to detect energy controlling organs and compare their sizes with energy characteristics of different animals. His experiments indicated that the brain, heart, thyroid and adrenal glands and sympathetic nervous system controlled energy.

On this basis Crile pursued research toward relation of these organs to such diseases as high blood pressure, failures of circulation resulting from emotion or fatigue, heart disease, diabetes, overactive thyroid glands and stomach ulcer—ailments peculiar to man in his most civilized state. The study aimed also at a definition of civilized man in terms of energy, and ultimately to determine whether relative size of energy organs would explain man's diseases and powers.

For animal specimens used in this work Crile searched the far corners of the earth. Early in his research Crile evolved a method of overcoming "traumatic shock," the medical term which describes the method by which the sensation of pain is conveyed to the brain through the nerves leading to the part affected.

Before the Medical Society of the State of New York Crile theorized on what he called "the kinetic system." He said this "system" consisted of a chain of five organs—brain, suprarenals, liver, muscles and thyroid—whose primary function was the transformation of latent energy into heat and motion. Deficiency in any link of the "kinetic chain," he said, caused loss of heat, of muscular or emotional reaction, of mental power and of the ability to combat infection.

His ultimate goal was development of his method for treatment of hypertension, or high blood pressure. The method involved removal of the abdominal nerve centre known as the celiac ganglion and severing of the nerves leading to the adrenal glands.

During his war service in France, Crile sought to determine how long wounds might go unattended before there was danger of tetanus infection (lockjaw). With others who made similar studies, he was credited with saving the lives and limbs of hundreds of soldiers as a result of this work and the development of methods for treatment of shock.

Some who watched the deft surgeon perform operations said he possessed a sense of "showmanship" that flashed in his technique. Associates, however, said the only element of showmanship was his "skill" which amounted to artistry.

His manner was brisk and confident. He dominated groups and meetings, and fellow-surgeons, some of whom disagreed with his theories, frequently remarked about his personality. "He never slumped," a research collaborator said of him in describing his vitality.

King, Rt. Hon. William Lyon Mackenzie (MG 26 J 7 volume 17) Dr. and Mrs. Dougall Macdougall (Max) King - Clippings - Nerves and Personal Power - Reviews n.d., 1922-1943

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