

## Drug reduces heart attacks

A new drug discovered in Canada has resulted in significant reductions in the death rate and in the rate of recurrent heart attacks, reports Louise Crosby in *The Citizen*, April 2.

The findings of a 33-month study involving 1,884 heart attack patients in Norway showed a 40 per cent reduction in the over-all death rate among patients taking a drug marketed under the name Blocadren.

The over-all death rate in a high-risk group of patients who survived a first heart attack was cut virtually in half after treatments with the drug, known as the chemical timolol maleate.

According to the study, the beneficial results of Blocadren were obtained regardless of age, sex, smoking habits, high blood pressure or the severity of the initial heart attack. Those who took part in the study ranged in age from 20

to 75 years.

The drug was discovered in the Merck Frosst Laboratories in the Montreal suburb of Kirkland by a team headed by Dr. Burton K. Wasson.

It has been marketed in Europe for the past six years and in Canada since 1977 for the treatment of high blood pressure and angina pectoris, a heart condition.

A solution of the drug which is used as eye drops has also been found medically useful in the treatment of glaucoma.

The Norwegian study included patients from 20 hospitals serving one-third of Norway's population. There were 352 patients who had suffered more than one heart attack; 1,091 patients who had had one heart attack but were considered at high risk of subsequent attacks because of complications; and 441 considered at low risk because of the absence of complications.

Treatment with timolol was started seven to 28 days after the attack and con-

tinued for up to 33 months.

Wasson and his team of seven chemists began work in the 1960s, searching for substances that controlled the stimulant action of adrenalin on the heart. By the end of the decade, they had discovered timolol maleate. It took until 1977 to complete basic research and development on Blocadren.

The study has been under review since its completion last October.

Generally, only one out of 3,000 compounds investigated eventually has therapeutic potential and perhaps one in ten of those is broadly effective. The time required to develop a new drug from laboratory to pharmacy can be as long as 15 years.

## Seventeenth century Canadian heroines honoured

Two 17-cent postage stamps honouring two seventeenth century Canadian women, Kateri Tekakwitha and Mère Marie de L'Incarnation, were issued April 24.

Kateri Tekakwitha, known as the "Lily of the Mohawks," was born in 1656 in what is now Auriesville in New York State; she was raised by an uncle after her Mohawk father and Algonquian mother died of smallpox. She soon left her village to live at the St. Francis Xavier mission near Montreal, where she lived a virtuous life until her death in 1680 at the age of 24. The Roman Catholic Church declared her venerable in 1943 and beatified in 1980. She is the first North American Indian to receive either honour.

Marie Guyart, later known as Marie de l'Incarnation, was born in 1559 in France. After her husband died she entered the Ursuline convent and later came to Quebec, where she founded the Ursuline order and acted as Superior of its convent until her death in 1672. She dedicated herself to the education of French and Indian girls, having mastered several Indian languages and compiled Algonquian and Iroquoian dictionaries. She was declared venerable in 1911 and beatified in 1980.

Statues of the subjects by sculptor Emile Brunet were used for the design of the stamps. The designer, Laurent Marquart of Montreal, has used high-contrast photos of both works in appropriate colours combined with identifying graphic elements for each stamp: the lily, insignia of the Ursuline order, and the turtle, symbol of Kateri's clan of the Mohawk tribe.



## Gretzky rewrites records

Wayne Gretzky of the Edmonton Oilers of the National Hockey League rewrote three records as the 1980-81 regular season came to a close.

The 20-year-old centre from Brantford, Ontario broke Phil Esposito's mark for most points in a season (152) and Bobby Orr's season-assist mark (102) both set during the 1970-71 season when they were with the Boston Bruins. Gretzky also became the first NHL player to average more than two points a game over an entire season and passed the 300 point mark of his career quicker than any player in the history of the league.

He finished with a season total of 164 points — 55 goals and 109 assists — for an average of 2.05 a game over 80 games allowing him to break Bill Cowley's record of 1.97 points a game set in 1943 with Boston during a 36-game season.

## Fur trade route retraced

Six Quebec men are planning to retrace the route used by North West Company voyageurs in the days of the fur trade.

The 4,800-kilometre (3,000-mile) trip from northern Alberta to Quebec, called Expedition Voyageur 81, will start on May 15 in Fort McMurray on the Athabasca River. By travelling along the Clearwater and Churchill rivers, Lake Winnipeg and Lake Superior, the paddlers, led by Pierre Beauchamp, hope to reach Montreal in August.