

PUBLIC FORUM

(A) KORO

Chairman: Dr. P.W. Ngui, M.B., B.S., D.P.M.

Guest Speaker: Professor (Dr.) S.H. Alatas, Doctor in the Political and Social Sciences (Amsterdam.)

Speakers: Dr. Gwee Ah Leng, M.D., F.R.C.P., P.J.G., J.P.

Dr. Y. C. Wong, M.B., M.R.C.P.E., D.P.M.

SYNOPSIS

The history of koro ('shook yang') was traced through the Chinese literature (medical and non-medical); the cultural beliefs of its causal factors, and the traditional, empirical methods of treatment were outlined.

Recent modern psychiatric concepts of koro were reviewed; koro as a psychoneurotic, culture bound syndrome; or psychosis. The former condition was favoured.

Koro is an acute anxiety reaction, characterised by fear of dissolution due to the retraction of the penis. It is usually sporadic. The local

epidemic apparently occurred as a result of unfounded rumours about eating infected pork or injected pork. The Chinese male population was affected preponderantly though there were a few female cases seen, with complaints of retraction of the breasts.

Further studies were suggested to determine whether there was a distinction between the sporadic case of koro and the epidemic case of koro, the homogeneity of the condition and in particular the socio-cultural factors in those cases occurring among the non-Chinese population.

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(B) CANCER

Chairman: Dr. N. Tan

Participants: Mr. Y. Cohen, Mr. T. L. Lean

Dr. Chia Kim Boon, Dr. Gwee Ah Leng

The forum began with a definition of cancer, and went on to discuss the problems of early diagnosis, the treatment, and the curability. Early detection was stressed by presentation of figures of cervical cancer pick-up in Kandang

Kerbau Hospital. As regards treatment, it was pointed out that a good proportion of cancer cases could be cured with radical surgery, and also that cancer was not necessarily painful or rapidly progressing disease, but rather a mixture of many manifestations according to the organs it invaded. The use of radiotherapy in radical treatment and palliation was discussed.

Questions from the floor included risk of cigarette smoking, value of routine examination in the detection of cancer, and the evaluation of the so-called warning signs of cancer in the pamphlet of the Singapore Cancer Society.