

# State

## Research shows vitamin E fights childhood blindness

United Press International  
BOSTON — High doses of vitamin E given to premature babies can help prevent a primary cause of childhood blindness, Texas medical researchers said Thursday.

Researchers from Baylor College of Medicine and the University of Texas found vitamin E given orally in high doses to 50 premature infants within 24 hours of birth and daily for at least eight weeks thereafter prevented blindness. These infants suffered from retrolental fibroplasia, researchers said in the New England Journal of Medicine.

RF is caused when extra oxygen given to premature infants to prevent brain damage and death causes blood vessels in the eye to branch more thickly than normal. This can result in an opaque tissue forming be-

hind the lens or in detachment of the retina — separation of the innermost lining of the eye.

RF damages vision in about 1,500 children yearly in the United States and blinds 500 more, said Dr. Helen Mintz Hittner, coordinator of the study at the Texas Children's Hospital in Houston. In its mildest form, it causes such visual impairments as nearsightedness or lazy eye.

The vitamin did not, however, reduce the numbers of infants affected by the disease. About 65 percent of each group — 50 infants received high doses and 51 low doses of the vitamin — contracted milder forms of the disorder.

"It's not a panacea," Hittner said. "It certainly could decrease the incidence (of blindness) significantly, and, combined with some of the surgical therapies available, can help

wipe it out."

An earlier study to pin down oxygen dosages that would not cause RF failed, and newborn specialists have had to "walk a very fine line" between providing enough oxygen to keep the infant alive and providing amounts that would cause blindness, Hittner said.

Vitamin E combines with oxygen left over from the amount needed to sustain life and neutralizes it, Hittner said. The vitamin tends to concentrate in the retina.

The vitamin is used as a diet supplement and is being studied for other uses, but has not been approved by the federal Food and Drug Administration for eye disorders, she said.

But she said because the therapy is "a technique whose time has come," the obstacles will probably be removed soon.

## And now the land is his ...

United Press International  
AUSTIN — A relieved Jesse Johnson greeted the news that he had passed the last legal hurdle in obtaining clear title to his property by working the land he and his wife have owned for 53 years.

"I got to stay here now and try to work it," said Johnson, who was born 81 years ago and reared 1 1/2 miles from the 120 acres. "I got to keep making a living at it now. Yes sir, I'm sure glad it's over."

The Leon County farmer said he had been out working the land when a telephone caller notified him the governor had signed a patent, an official document granting him clear title to the property.

"I wish he was here," Clements said in Austin.

It took passage of a constitutional amendment by Texas voters in the Nov. 3 election to give Johnson and two other families clear title to their land.

"I think justice is done," Clements said. "It's a good feeling to know that these kinds of circumstances can be reconciled and those people are given their just due."

Johnson raised nine children on the land, and then learned he did not hold clear title. W.Q. Barrett,

who owns 107 acres, and Marion and Glenn Toal, who own 67.2 acres, also learned they did not hold clear titles.

The problem arose from a grant of 640 acres of land to a soldier for the Republic of Texas, Thornton P. Kuykendall, who was given the right to claim the property as payment for his service in guarding the baggage during the Battle of San Jacinto.

Kuykendall properly claimed 320 acres of land in Leon and Freestone counties, filed survey notes on 320 acres in Leon County which includes the Johnson farm, and later filed a claim for title to 221 acres in Young County. Records in the general land office show Kuykendall failed to file proper documentation with his

second 320-acre claim in Leon County, and the state never legally surrendered title to the property.

Johnson bought his 120-acre tract for \$2,000 and paid for it with wages he earned as a 26-cent-an-hour section hand for the railroad.



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## Cyanide poisoning still baffling Houston officials

United Press International  
HOUSTON — A 32-year-old housewife, one of 10 people whose blood tests have revealed traces of cyanide from an unknown source, says she feels like a character in a science fiction novel: "Now it's happening to me."

City health officials said they were baffled by the nonfatal poisonings that have struck 10 people in a 15-block area of the Heights, about four miles from downtown. The source of the poison remained unknown Wednesday night.

Linda Rassiner, 32, said blood tests conducted while she was being treated for bronchitis last week revealed the presence of cyanide.

"It's frightening," she said. "How often do you hear the word cyanide, let alone find out you have it in your blood?"

The tests showed Rassiner had

eight micrograms of cyanide per deciliter (about 3.4 ounces) of blood. Tests on the other patients have shown their blood contained between 2 micrograms and 28 micrograms per deciliter.

Dr. Tim Oesch, a general practitioner who discovered the poisonings, said: "There's not a whole lot of material available on the cyanide or its lethal dosage. But it appears that the tests are significant to the extent that 25 percent of the lowest lethal dose is present."

He said lethal doses of cyanide have been recorded between 100 micrograms and 1,500 micrograms per deciliter.

Symptoms, including dizziness, fatigue, nausea and depression, seem to disappear when the patient leaves the area, indicating the body rapidly excretes the poison, Oesch said.

Rassiner said the cyanide left her bedridden last week, but she

felt better this week.

"It's an intermittent thing," she said. "Last Wednesday, I was terribly depressed and cried for six hours straight. I was hysterical. I didn't even know about the cyanide then."

Rassiner said blood tests for her husband and 12-year-old daughter were negative. The family plans to stay in the Heights unless there's a death or lethal level found, she said. "Then I'd consider leaving," she said.

Dr. Herbert McKee, a city health official, said epidemiologists were interviewing the 10 victims and testing other people, hoping to discover the source of the poison through a common link among the victims.

"We're asking them about occupational experience, life style, recreation, food, medicine, a lot of things, trying to establish a pattern," he said.

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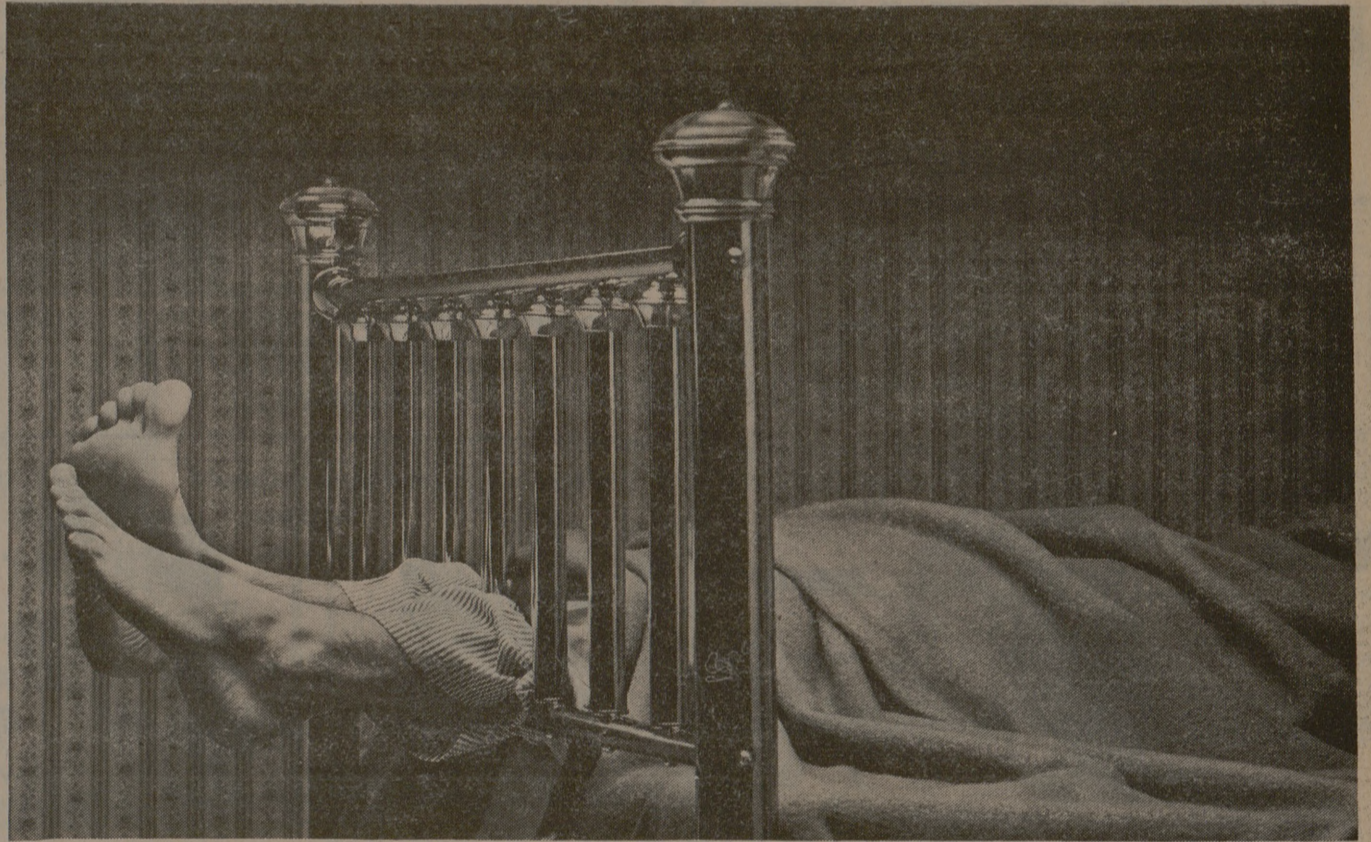
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