

Doctor says nations don't withhold medical information

By Lucy Bighia

Plunging temperatures in the cold war between the United States and the Soviet Union are having little effect on the exchange of medical information between the two countries, according to world-renowned surgeon Dr. Michael DeBakey.

DeBakey, president of Baylor College of Medicine in Houston, spoke in Lincoln Friday at a conference on cardiovascular disease and its prevention. More than 300 medical students and professionals attended the NU-sponsored workshop at the Nebraska Center for Continuing Education.

Now in his early 70s, DeBakey pioneered the development of the artificial heart and its transplant. He also invented a surgical pump that later became an essential component of the heart-lung machine.

Such medical advances would not be possible, he said, without the free and open exchange of research between different countries, especially the Soviet Union and the United States.

No secrets

"There are no such things as medical secrets," he said. "We share all of our information."

DeBakey said it was still too soon to tell

whether President Carter's recent restrictions on the sales of high technology equipment to the Soviets would strangle cooperative efforts in heart research.

"We (the researchers) haven't been told of any changes . . . but it's possible there may be some," he said.

On another international matter, DeBakey said Yugoslavian President Tito seems to be recovering from circulatory problems in his left leg.

The doctor had just returned to the United States after an unexpected trip to Yugoslavia to treat the ailing Tito.

DeBakey said that by the time he left, Tito's circulatory problems seemed to be better and his general condition improving.

Earlier in the news conference, DeBakey said the total replacement of a failing heart with an artificial heart is still technically in the laboratory stage. There are, however, devices that can be surgically implanted to support a heart temporarily, he said.

Just when an artificial heart will be perfected, "nobody knows," he said.

Coronary bypass

DeBakey was more definite when speaking about the value of coronary bypass surgery.

"There is no question, the data is in,"

he said. Coronary bypass surgery is the best way to treat those patients who really need it.

In a coronary bypass, new blood vessels are taken from another part of the body, usually the leg, and grafted to the heart to carry blood to blocked coronary arteries.

The procedure was the subject of a heated debate several years ago after the release of a Veterans Administration report on the difference in progress of patients treated with drugs and those who underwent bypass surgery.

But the study was misinterpreted, DeBakey said, adding that bypass surgery is now completely accepted among knowledgeable doctors.

Lincoln surgeons perform between 220 and 230 bypass operations each year.

As for prevention of heart attacks and heart disease, the doctor told his audience there are no concrete answers.

The old principles of good health and nutrition are the best rules to follow, he said.

He advised listeners to have their blood pressure checked regularly, stop smoking and get plenty of exercise. But before embarking on a rigorous exercise program, such as jogging, a person should have a thorough physical examination, DeBakey warned.



Photo by Tom Gesner

Heart specialist Dr. Michael DeBakey.

Grain embargo will cause slowdown of economic activity

By Kevin Field

January and February could bring slow times to rural Nebraska, but not because of the threat of recession.

The grain embargo imposed against the Soviet Union by President Carter on Jan. 3 has caused the grain industry to decrease selling. That should cause a slowdown of economic activity within the state until normal price patterns return, according to a UNL agricultural economist.

"The merchants of outstate Nebraska could see a slow start in 1980," said Prof. Mike Turner.

Drastic step

The embargo is the most drastic economic sanction against the Soviets in response to their invasion of Afghanistan. More than 17 million metric tons of grain previously promised will not be delivered. In addition, Soviet fishing rights within American waters will be curtailed and technology sales will stop.

The grain embargo will have more political effect than economic against the Soviets, according to Turner.

"There should be temporary inconveniences to the Soviets. They will have difficulty getting adequate grain supplies in the next six months to a year," Turner said.

But bilateral trade agreements may make it possible for them to obtain part or all of their needed grain supplies, he said.

Embargo justified

"Politically we are showing the Soviets that the U.S. is willing to deal with their actions. There is certainly greater justification for an embargo today than there was in 1973," Turner said.

The embargo should mean a decrease in Russia's standard of living, according to Ernst Kuhn, professor of economics. Most of the grain would have been used for cattle feed, he said, so without the grain, beef production will drop.

Kuhn said the Soviet Union has a regulated economy and can absorb economic shocks such as an embargo easier than an economy operating under the free market system.

"Their people may be unhappy, but we should not suspect that it will lead to an uprising. They are nationalists too," Kuhn said.

The negative effects of an embargo should also be temporary in the United States. The immediate effect of the embargo was a removal of 17 million tons of grain demand, causing a price drop, Turner said. The government had promised to remove the grain from the market to prevent drastic drops in prices, but the

solution is not that simple, Kuhn said.

Transport problems

Many of the problems created by the embargo are transportation linked. Much of the grain was already in the transportation pipeline and on its way to the Soviet Union. The new supply represents a plug in the system, Turner said.

"I do not believe there was adequate consideration given as to the effect on prices and the complications of trans-

portation. It is not a matter of the government buying grain back, it depends on where it is in the pipeline," he said.

The increases in the commodities market last Friday is an indication that international traders are willing to make offers to buy and sell, Turner said. For the markets to get back in line, buying and selling must resume in both the futures and the cash market. That could occur within two weeks, or it could take 30 to 60 days, he said.

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