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Nº 3

SUCCESS OF JAPAN'S CHALLENGE TO IMPROVE DRASTICALLY TREATMENT OF DIABETES

Until now, the cellules which compose the delicate human pancreas are believed to be irreparable, once they lose their original vitality and secretional functions. But a group of Japanese doctors are developing a break-through project on this medical challenge, using a special composite of protein created through hyper-biotechnological methods.

Doctor Hiroshi Okamoto of the University of Tohoku together with Doctor Yutaka Yonemura of the University of Kanazawa, (both universities are public and located in the Northern Japan), have recently succeeded in an animal test of this revolutionary idea.

As it is well known, pancreas causes diabetes, the most common disease throughout the world; once its cellules are damaged by some reason, the only remedies are its transplant or using artificial substitute, both being extremely difficult surgical operations. Hence, only in Japan, there are nearly five million diabetic patients. The new method sends to them a great news for complete cure in the future not long away. These patients have been receiving "insuline", to cover the shortage of digestive secretions necessary to sustain their lives.

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"Insuline", a digestive secretion, is created by "the so-called beta cellules" of pancreas, since the shortage of insuline in a human body is caused by the damage of these particular cellules, the two doctors tried to identify the genetical bodies which lead to the production of the "beta cellules" and to analize the specific composition of genetical information on these bodies. On the basis of this information, they succeeded in reproducing artificially the exactly same type of productive protein.

They have given this protein for two months to the testing mice and rats whose pancreas are cut off by 90% in size. They have discovered that most of them recovered a full size of pancreas after this testing period and, furthermore, they have confirmed that the new cellules produce insuline, reducing the amount of sugar in their blood and urine.

YUKIHISA ETO
Ambassador of Japan
in chile
From Yomiuri Newspaper,
May 10th, 1993

№ 5

CARS MUST MEET STRICTER SAFETY STANDARDS

The Ministry of Transport is upgrading safety standards to put the brakes on the rising number of traffic fatalities, which have topped 10,000 for the past five years. Taking note of National Police Agency figures showing that almost half of those killed in traffic accidents are vehicle occupants, and that about 70 percent of these people die in head-on collisions, the Ministry has particularly called for improvements in the ability of cars to absorb the impact of collisions. The new standards will in principle apply to domestically produced vehicles built after March 1994 and to imported vehicles built after March 1995.

Under the new regulations, cars must be tested for their ability to absorb the shock of crashing into a concrete wall at 50 kilometers per hour. The Ministry says that the impact will be equivalent to a frontal collision of two cars moving at 50 KPH since each car absorbs about half the shock. No more than 5 percent of head-on collisions are said to exceed this degree of impact.

The vehicles must be able to satisfy certain criteria under test conditions the state of the dummies wearing seat belts with shoulder straps in the driver's and front passenger seats must indicate that such a collision would not result in concussion, that the chest and internal organs of

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occupants would remain intact, and that there would be no fracture of ribs, sternum, knee bones, or thigh bones.

The new regulations call for all-round improvements to ensure passenger safety as far as possible. Car hoods must be able to better absorb the shock of impact, and steering wheels must be collapsible. Safety belts for rear-seat passengers must be fitted with shoulder straps, and to persuade more people to wear seat belts, cars will have to have alarms that ring if the belts remain unfastened when the car is in motion. Defogging and defrosting capabilities must also be upgraded, and interiors made fire-resistant.

Furthermore, a vehicle travelling at 100 KPH must be able to stop within 70 meters after braking, and even when the brake is overheated the car has to be able to stop within 90 meters. Braking power must be maintained as far as possible even when the brake pedal is not firmly pressed down.

Many automakers have already adopted some of these measures voluntarily. Almost all passenger cars already have seat belts with shoulder straps for front-seat passengers, and more cars are being fitted with them for rear-seat occupants as well.

(The material herein is based on domestic Japanese news sources and is offered for reference purposes. It does not necessarily represent the policy or views of the Japanese Government or of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.)

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