Hepatic Fibrosis or Cirrhosis in Children in Djakarta

L.K.	Lie Kian	Joe
S.	Sutomo	Tjokronegoro

(Djakarta, Indonesia)

Studies based on biopsy of specimens of liver have revealed that fibrosis or cirrhosis of the liver is fairly frequent among certain groups of children in Djakarta (Indonesia). It has been observed among children suffering from severe kwashiorkor-like diseases and also among those not showing clinical symptoms of malnutrition.

Of 104 biopsies obtained from patients with kwashiorkor-like conditions, 18 specimens showed moderate to severe fibrosis, and of 57 biopsies obtained from children without signs of malnutrition, 11 specimens showed fibrosis. In both groups, the age of the children showing fibrosis was between 2½ months and 10 years, most of the children being between 1 year and 4 years of age. They were equally divided as to sex.

Serial biopsies over periods of 1 month to 2 years in 22 children with kwashiorkor-like disease, obtained during the recovery stage (in 2 cases also on readmission for relapses), showed no definite increase of fibrous tissue in the liver. This suggests that if malignant malnutrition does cause fibrosis of the liver it does so slowly, and only after a prolonged or chronic illness. Marked fatty infiltration of the liver was often observed in these children, but this change subsided without concomitant proliferation of connective tissue.

The occurrence of moderate to marked fibrosis in very young children and in children without obvious symptoms of malnutrition makes it necessary to look for other etiologic factors responsible for the proliferation of connective tissue in the livers of these children.

One of the possible factors seems to be a disease presenting the clinical symptoms of viral hepatitis, a disease held by clinicians to be frequent in children as well as adults in Djakarta.

Seven of the children showing fibrosis of the liver had this disease. However, the liver changes in these children differed from those usually observed in acute viral hepatitis. Outright necrosis of liver cells was not a feature of the liver changes but the development of fibrosis was obvious. Whether the liver changes in question are etiologically related to viral hepatitis cannot be stated with certainty yet.