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News

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*****Lunar Rock analysis method used in medical research.

DALLAS--Sensitive detection methods used to analyze moon rocks will be used by Dallas scientists to look for abnormal lead levels in victims of Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis, also known as Lou Gehrig's disease.

Dr. Jay D. Cook, assistant professor of neurology at The University of Texas Southwestern Medical School and Chief of the Muscle Disease Section, Veterans Administration Hospital and William I. Manton, a geochemist at The University of Texas at Dallas, will collaborate on the ALS-lead study under a \$23,420 grant from the Muscular Dystrophy Association.

Dr. Cook also will be investigating the value of corticosteroid in treatment of polymyositis, (a connective tissue disease), of myasthenia gravis (a neuromuscular disorder) and of some other nerve-muscle diseases under a separate \$26,375 grant from the MDA.

In the ALS probe, Dr. Manton explained that lead had been suspected as a causative agent since 1907. Reports in medical literature suggested ALS might follow lead poisoning or even exposure. Secondly, he said, there were reports that drugs used in lead poisoning also helped ALS but these weren't verified. There were, he added, some recent reports of increased concentrations of lead in spinal fluid and plasma of ALS victims.

In the Dallas studies, the scientists will determine levels of lead in tissue of ALS patients and also the distribution of lead in the central nervous system.

Dr. Manton said it was a relatively simple matter to adapt the techniques developed for analyzing moon rocks to measure biological samples.

ALS was associated with Gehrig's name after the famous baseball player developed the debilitating malady in the 1930s.

The two grants were part of \$63,940,134 allocated by the MDA for 1979, the largest amount in the history of the 28-year-old volunteer health agency. Of this, \$17,989,844 went for more than 600 individual research projects involving 36 neuromuscular diseases.

Funds from the MDA help maintain clinics operated by Southwestern Medical School and Baylor University Medical Center.

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