Chapter 26

The Western doctor: "I'm from Missouri!"

The medical profession in the West does not share Prof. Aslan's conviction that procaine can halt premature aging. It is perhaps even less convinced that a general therapy for old age has been developed in Bucharest. In part, this skepticism is undoubtedly a reaction to Prof. Aslan's unfortunate use of the word "rejuvenation." Also, many doctors in the United States are still under the impression that Prof. Aslan reported her work to the press rather than to her colleagues, whereas quite the contrary is true—she has always presented her reports to reputable medical bodies, including the IVth International Gerontological Congress in Merano, Italy in 1957.

There are, however, three very basic criticisms which medical researchers here make of the data on which Prof. Aslan bases her claims for procaine therapy.

1. The number of patients originally treated is too small for statistical analyses to be significant, and no careful statistical analysis of the thousands treated in
the past two years has yet appeared. The medical statistician will turn to Table 1 on page ..., and point out, for example, that the deaths of only two more patients in any year would have increased the mortality rate by from 66.6 to 200 per cent! He will also note that the median age of patients who died is of no significance, especially since the median age of the patients able to work or able to take care of themselves is not given. He will want to know on what basis patients are admitted to the old age home; whether those whom doctors judge permanently helpless are admitted as readily as those for whom a reasonable prognosis is a continued period of self-sufficiency.

2. There is no indication that control groups were evenly matched. The table on page 69 indicates that the mortality of procaine-treated patients was only 2.7 per cent, and that of patients not treated with procaine was 10.3 per cent. But the careful medical scientist asks immediately: Were the patients in the procaine-treated group as ill as those who were not treated with procaine? Did this latter group of people receive any treatment at all? Were they receiving the same diet, given the same care, under the same conditions of sanitation?

Dr. Donald Mainland, in his book "Elementary Medical Statistics," tells of two researchers who were