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Healing of Fracture in Animals Speeded By Static Electricity

By JANE E. BRODY

Scientists at Columbia University yesterday reported encouraging results in tests on animals of the use of static electricity to speed the healing of fractured bones.

The method, if shown to be effective in man, could simplify the current experimental use of electrical bone healing, in which electrodes are implanted directly into the bone to set up electrical charges on either side of the fracture point.

This method has been shown in patients to speed greatly the healing of stubborn fractures and to stimulate healing of breaks that do not heal on their own.

The new approach would eliminate the need to implant electrodes, and instead would place the fractured limb in an electric force field maintained between two metal plates by a conventional dry-cell battery. The plates and battery would be attached externally, held in place by a cast.

Electrical bone healing is based on the observation by a number of researchers that the formation of bone is enhanced by the application of a weak direct current. Deposition of collagen and apatite, the major constituents of new bone, occur around a negatively charged area.