

Killer 'we must arrest at once'

WANTED: Information leading to the arrest of public enemy No 1—coronary heart disease, the greatest killer in New Zealand history. REWARD: A longer, healthier life.

Dr D. S. Frederickson, who has some of the answers, arrived in Christchurch from the United States yesterday to continue his inquiries. As inaugural lecturer for the National Heart Foundation of New Zealand, he hopes to allow the public to claim the reward.

But the people's co-operation is essential.

"We know a lot about coronary heart disease already, but there is a lot more to be learned about what has to be done to defeat it," Dr Frederickson said.

"The answer is to get cracking with prevention. Transplants and surgical treatment will never be an answer to it. We have conquered the infectious diseases—now it is time to take a look at the chronic variety."

In world heart disease rank-

ings, New Zealand rates fourth behind Finland, Scotland and the United States—and the problem is increasing. Factors contributing to this in order of importance are high blood pressure, high blood cholesterol and other fats, cigarette smoking and diabetes.

TOO MUCH

"Too much blood cholesterol, a fatty product manufactured in the body tissues, is a big factor. Nobody knows the ideal proportion of cholesterol to blood but it is probably something like 150mg of cholesterol to 100ml of blood," he said.

"The average New Zealander has a proportion of about 230 mg to 100 ml of blood."

Dr Frederickson advocates more closely supervised diets and regular exercise as two of the main means of combating heart disease.

Exercise does not necessarily thwart coronary trouble, but it does give the person who has it more chance of surviving the eventual cardiac arrest, he says.

"So while you are waiting for your first heart attack, it would be wise to get yourself in the best possible physical shape," he advised.

Statistics had proved that the person who smoked a packet of cigarettes a day had a 70 per cent greater likelihood of having a premature heart attack than the non-smoker.

smoker.

NOT SURE

"The number of people who have heart attacks which are related to smoking is much greater than those who suffer from lung cancer," said Dr. Frederickson, who himself smokes a pipe.

"The problem today is that we are not exactly sure what we want everyone to do. While that is being found out, special attention is being paid to those with high risks."

He said more intensive screening for such risks was needed. It was essential that everyone between 25 and 30 had one cholesterol and blood fat test.

If abnormal, there were things which could be done to correct this — especially diet control and drugs.

Heart disease killed more people before the age of 65 than any other factor — it had to be stopped early, Dr. Frederickson said.

REPORT, PAGE 14.