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The most impressive result of cancer chemotherapy, up to the present time, is the curative effect of Methotrexate in women with disseminated choriocarcinoma. Roy Hertz (b. 1909, in Cleveland, Ohio), pictured on the left, while chief of the Endocrinology Branch of the National Cancer Institute, Bethesda, Maryland, was instrumental in introducing and developing the therapy. The first observations were made in collaboration with M. C. Li (b. 1919, in Canton, China), who is pictured on the right (Li, M. C., Hertz, R., and Spencer, D. B. Effect of Methotrexate Therapy upon Choriocarcinoma and Chorioadenoma. Proc. Soc. Exptl. Biol. and Med., 93: 361–366, 1956).

Complete and sustained remissions of this otherwise fatal disease were achieved in over 50% of patients (Hertz, R., Lewis, J., and Lipsett, M. B. Five Years’ Experience with the Chemotherapy of Metastatic Choriocarcinoma and Related Trophoblastic Tumors in Women. Am. J. Obst. and Gyn., 82: 361–640, 1961). The figure shows the course of a patient with disseminated choriocarcinoma treated with intermittent courses of Methotrexate, who is alive and well 7 years later, and who experienced a normal pregnancy.

The results can be further improved by the use of actinomycin D in Methotrexate-resistant patients (Ross, G. T., Stelbach, L., and Hertz, R. Actinomycin D in the Treatment of Methotrexate-resistant Trophoblastic Disease in Women. Cancer Res., 22: 1015–1017, 1962).

We are indebted to Drs. Hertz and Li for the photographs and figure.