

REVIEW OF REVIEWS

TERMINAL DISINFECTION

The following editorial, on Terminal Disinfection, appeared in *The American Journal of Public Health*:

"This subject (terminal disinfection) has not been much discussed in the United States for some years past. As early as 1912, Charles V. Chapin, M. D., for the first, as far as we are aware, showed the doubtful value of terminal disinfection both as abstract proposition and as actually practiced. He discontinued terminal disinfection for certain diseases in the City of Providence as early as 1905. In 1914 it was discontinued in certain boroughs of New York City, and in Manhattan on January 1, 1915. Convincing figures were the discontinuance of terminal disinfection had not led to the increase of contagious diseases. An enormous amount of money was thereby saved without detriment to the public health. While other cities have followed suit, the practice is still continued in many places, and without doubt has a strong hold on the public as well as the profession.

"The matter was called to the public attention last year by a masterly presentation by Dr. Carlos Chagas, and more recently by a translation and reproduction of his article in England. In this country it would seem almost unnecessary to comment upon this subject except for the widespread sale of disinfectants, good, bad, and indifferent, and the frequent advertisement of alleged new discoveries of germicidal substances, though we believe that these appear much less frequently than a few years ago, when scarcely a week passed without some alleged discovery. The great majority of these preparations were coal tar products, and their relative value depended upon the amount of a few active substances which they contained, and upon their miscibility and solubility. One has only to consult the table worked out by the late Dr. McClintic to become convinced of the lack of value of many of these preparations. The names of them often indicated the known chemical upon which their value, such as it was, depended. It was always cheaper and better to use the chemicals, which were easily obtainable from wholesale houses in greater or less degrees of purity.

"A survey of disinfection as practiced in various countries has convinced Dr. Chagas that the procedure was almost always useless, based on incorrect ideas, and the results not commensurate with the expense, conclusions which had been reached by Dr. Chapin and others many years ago. While these procedure have had a certain educational value, and have allayed the fears of nervous people, their actual value has been slight. Unfortunately, if disease germs are scattered through premises in which contagious diseases have been treated, it is impossible in most cases to locate them, or to influence them through any 'process of camouflage,' as it has been called by Dr. Balfour. It has been wisely taught for some years that a properly cared for case of contagious disease should not be allowed to contaminate the surroundings. Dr. Chagas stresses the point that the great objection to terminal disinfection is not so much its uselessness as a preventive measure, but the fact that it seems necessary. The real danger from a contagious disease lies in the excretions from the body. Disinfection of the

sputum, excreta, and pathological discharges, should be carried out during the progress of the case rather than after death or recovery, since whatever danger is possible has already occurred and late disinfection cannot do away with it.

"Patients suffering from communicable diseases must be protected during their illness. Clothing, bedding, towels, utensils, and all other objects which are used or which come into contact with the patient should be promptly disinfected. The high value of hot water and soap, sunshine and fresh air must not be forgotten. It is expensive and impracticable to increase the rigor of terminal disinfection to a point where it will be absolutely effective.

"Dr. Chagas takes up in detail a number of contagious diseases to demonstrate his ideas and one cannot read his arguments without being convinced of the soundness of his reasoning, backed up as it is by an extensive experience.

"As Americans, we take pride in the fact that, as far as our knowledge goes, Dr. Chapin preceded all others in these ideas and in the practical demonstration of their soundness; but we welcome the clear presentation given by Dr. Chagas in corroboration of what we have believed and practiced for a number of years."

EGGS AS FOOD

The Journal of the American Medical Association for September 29, brings an interesting editorial entitled "An Encomium on the Egg."

"Milk and eggs play comparable parts in the economy of nature. They serve as the sole sources of nutriment to certain types of developing organisms at a period when almost all tissues are experiencing a rapid growth. It might be anticipated, therefore, that each of these biologic products contains a notable complement of the various nutrient factors that are essential to the growing organism. This involves not merely sources of energy like the fats and carbohydrates, indispensable nitrogenous precursors of the production of proteins, and the essential body components of an inorganic sort, but also the as yet less tangible requisites represented by the various vitamins.

"The significance of milk in human nutrition beyond the stage of infancy is becoming adequately recognized. Its growing popularity is reflected in the increasing sales of fluid milk. The per capita consumption in New York, for example, in 1926 was 139 quarts, or 39 per cent higher than fifteen years earlier. The United States now harbors more than 22,000,000 dairy cattle—an equivalent of one cow for every five persons. The substantial value of milk has been demonstrated by numerous experiments and heralded by incessant propaganda. Mrs. Rose has well described it as a stabilizing factor in the human dietary; it supplies some portion of many essentials, and thus tends to prevent any serious shortage that a ration devoid of milk might more readily exhibit.

"The merits of the hen's egg in a similar respect have lately been substantiated experimentally by Rose and McCollum at Teachers' College, Columbia University. Earlier studies with a group of young children had indicated that the addition of an egg a day to a diet that appeared to be adequate resulted in improvement in general health and in the hemoglobin content of the blood. The newer tests were conducted on a species—the albino rat—comparable in many respects, as to its nutritive needs, with the human species, yet having a life

span so adjusted that two and one-half years in the life of a child corresponds to a single month in the case of the animal. Such investigations are highly desirable because at present there is no available criterion of the nutritive value of a diet except the biologic test. In Rose and McCollum's experiments the incorporation of egg equal to only 3 per cent of the total calories—in this case representing about an egg a day for a child—resulted in improvement in well being such as more liberal use of milk promotes. The New York investigators started with a diet already proved to be efficiently utilized and adequated for growth, and were surprised to find the egg diet not only more economically used for growth, as shown by gains in weight per thousand calories consumed, but also resulting in greater growth of the young. Their studies afford further evidence, as they conclude, of the possibility of improving a diet which is adequate for growth, and the usefulness of animal experimentation in finding optimal food combinations. Once again is demonstrated the importance of milk and eggs as staple foods for the production of a vigorous race."

EPILEPSY

In an article which appeared in the *Annals of Internal Medicine*, T. H. Weisenburg, of Philadelphia, gives the following opinion on "Reflex Epilepsy":

"Opinions differ as to reflex epilepsy. Two such distinguished neurologists as Oppenheim and Gowers have opposing points of view, the former stating that it is relatively a frequent cause, and Gowers that it occurs only in those with an epileptic disposition.

"Amongst the reflex causes which are commonly given, are disturbances in the nose and throat. Adenoids, polyps and diseased tonsils have been given not only as the cause of epilepsy, but of every disease known to medical science, and their removal has been hailed as a cure-all, but this has not been my experience. The same thing is true of diseases of the accessory sinuses and of ear diseases.

"So far as carious teeth and apical abscesses are concerned, I can only say that I have never seen the removal of apical abscesses cause a cessation of epilepsy. One of the traditions in our profession is that dentition in children may cause convulsions, and there is no denying that the irritable condition which these children get into is frequently accompanied by a convulsion, but my own thought has always been that such children belong to the spasmophilic group or are really cases of epilepsy.

"I have never been able to trace the relationship between the menses and epilepsy, although no doubt numerous authors can marshal many facts to disprove this statement. Neither can I see any relationship between pregnancy and epilepsy. I have seen instances in which attacks have either diminished or increased during the pregnant state.

"Sexual abuses such as masturbation have been given as frequent causes of convulsions, but I have never been able to trace the direct relationship between the two.

"Intestinal worms are commonly given as causes of fits in children. In the south the hookworm is supposedly a common cause of convulsions, and it is not

clear whether they are caused by direct invasion of the brain by the worm, or whether they are caused by a cerebral edema. I doubt this cause and when it occurs believe that these patients have epileptic tendencies."

He finishes his article with the following conclusion:

"Strictly speaking, there are no extra-cranial causes for epilepsy. When even convulsions occur from so-called toxic, reflex or other causes, it is because the subject of the attacks has either a tendency to epilepsy or is an epileptic."