

Lectures on Gynæcological Nursing

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LECTURE I.

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THE final point to remember is, that when the speculum is used, its end should be depressed before being removed, in order to permit the pool of water which accumulates behind the cervix to be removed; and, where the speculum is not used, that the patient should be directed to strain down after the removal of the tube in order to drain the vagina, for disagreeable consequences frequently occur from neglect of this precaution by inexperienced Nurses.

Plugs.—These form a very important item in gynæcological nursing, and require to be as carefully prepared as they must be efficiently applied if they are to be of any service to the patient. For the preparation of a plug a piece of cotton wool of the best absorbent variety is taken, in size corresponding to that which is required for the particular case. This is drawn into a smooth layer between the fingers, then doubled upon itself, and then rounded in form. An ordinary sized plug is about two inches in length, and one inch in thickness. A piece of string is tightly tied round the middle of the plug, one end of the string being left long. If a "kite tail" plug is wanted, a long piece of string is taken, and the plugs, which are then, usually, of much larger size, are tied along it at short intervals. This is a form which is very useful when the vagina has to be plugged to prevent or to stop hæmorrhage. Plugs are used either dry or wet, according to the result which it is sought to attain by their means. The dry plug, as a general rule, is used for the purpose either of disinfection, or for the prevention or absorption of discharge of any kind. The wet plug is prepared by soaking the cotton wool, with the string attached, in the preparation selected for several hours, glycerine being the fluid which is most commonly used.

The plug should be soaked in a small bowl containing glycerine or whatever other agent is ordered, and kept well covered to prevent the ingress of dust. It should be kept in the solution for at least five or six hours in order that it may become thoroughly impregnated with the fluid. Then before the plug is used, especially in cold weather, it is important to remember that it should be thoroughly warmed. This can be accomplished either by placing the dish for a few minutes in front of a fire, or by filling a soap dish with boiling water and putting the saucer containing the plug over this for a short time. The necessity for this precaution, in order to prevent a chill to the patient, has been previously explained. In placing

the plug, it is better, as a general rule, to do this through a speculum, so that the Nurse can insure its accurate adjustment. If it be desired then to apply a glycerine plug to the cervix, the Nurse will take the plug by long dressing forceps, holding it

about the middle, and through the speculum pass it right up against the cervix; then disengaging the forceps she will, with it, adjust the plug so as to envelop the cervical tissue. Then firmly pressing against the plug with the forceps, so as to keep it in position, she will withdraw the speculum over the forceps, taking care that the free end of the attached string also comes completely outside, so that the plug can by its means be subsequently removed; then the forceps are themselves withdrawn.

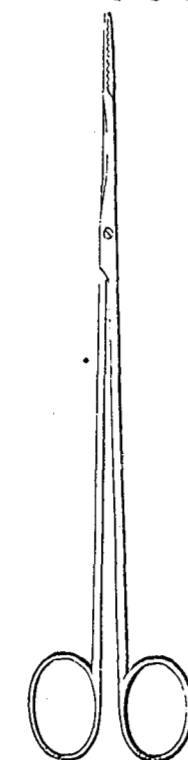


FIG. 6.

In plugging the vagina for hæmorrhage either as a matter of prevention or of control, the speculum is passed so as to expose the cervix thoroughly, then a long kite tail of plugs having been prepared, the first plug is passed by the forceps into the *cul-de-sac* behind the cervix, and tightly packed there; the next in similar manner is pressed into the anterior *cul-de-sac*; the third up against the cervix; then the speculum is withdrawn a little, and the fourth plug pressed in so as to occupy the posterior part of the vagina. In similar manner, the remaining plugs are introduced, each one filling the vagina firmly as the speculum is withdrawn. It is important to remember that in order to be effectual this plugging of the canal must be complete. In withdrawing, either the kite tail, or the single plug, the string outside the vagina is gently and firmly pulled upon. Roughness in performing this manœuvre would not only cause pain, but might start the hæmorrhage again—if the plugging had been done to check this. The object of the glycerine plug is to soothe inflamed surfaces or to drain off serum from the vessels of the cervix and so subdue congestion of the parts, this being accomplished by the eagerness with which glycerine sucks up fluid.

This brings us to the methods pursued for the abstraction of blood from the cervix for the purpose of relieving congestion of that organ. It is well known that in former days bleeding was a method of universal adoption, and that, indeed, so largely was the public persuaded of its virtues that, especially in rural districts, it was almost regarded as one of the laws of health that at certain seasons of the year the country gentlemen must be "blooded,"

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