

## Lectures on the Nursing of Lung Diseases.

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### CHAPTER V.

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THIS irritability of the throat, is generally worse when the patient is in a recumbent position, because, then, the uvula falls back on the congested fauces and sets up so much irritation that the cough is produced and maintained. In fact, in many cases of lung complaints, this throat irritation does irreparable mischief. The incessant cough exhausts the patient, distends the air cells, increases the secretion from the bronchial tubes, and prevents sleep, and thus the patient's strength is sapped, while his power of recuperation is weakened. It is often a matter of the utmost importance, then, to relieve this cough. The doctor will often effect this purpose by appropriate gargles, lozenges, or other local applications. And yet in his absence, the nurse, who does not understand the precise causation of the cough, may thwart the medical efforts, by allowing the patient to lay on his back, and with his head low down, in which position the uvula falls back against the fauces and causes the maximum amount of irritation. If, however, the nurse realises these facts, she will persuade the patient to lay on one side or the other, and with his head well raised.

In the next place, there are various practical methods whereby the nurse can afford much relief to the patient. Sometimes one sedative or astringent drug after another fails to relieve the cough, and in such cases the simplest means sometimes succeed in alleviating the throat irritation and the patient's distressing cough. For example, a teaspoonful of vinegar and a teaspoonful of glycerine with a table-spoonful of water may often be used as a gargle—with the most rapid results. Or again, a small handkerchief wrung out of cold water and placed on the front of the throat covered with a piece of oiled silk forms, in a few minutes, a hot compress which often affords speedy and great relief. The same principle of internal or external application to the throat is carried out in many different ways by medical orders. The object to be attained by the former is either sedative—to soothe the irritable mucous membrane—or astringent—to

contract the distended blood vessels and so relieve the congestion of the surface and the consequent nerve irritability. The latter effect is sought also in another way, by the external applications, which are mostly counter-irritants, and are designed to draw blood from the congested vessels in the throat to the surface of the outer skin.

Of the outward applications employed to relieve the congested throat of phthisical patients, the most popular is Iodine liniment, perhaps because it is not only a powerful counter-irritant, but always possesses a valuable action in reducing the swelling of the glands of the neck. One precaution is always necessary in using this remedy. Some patients are very readily blistered, and in such cases the Iodine may cause a sore which is difficult to heal, and which is not only unsightly, but adds considerably to the patient's existing troubles by the external irritation of the skin. In patients who have any tendency to gout or skin eruptions, the application of any counter-irritant is sometimes followed by an outbreak of eczema, a fact of which the patient will probably be aware by previous experience; and no wise nurse will neglect such a caution, but will defer the application which may have been ordered until she has reported the patient's idiosyncrasy to the doctor, and received his instructions whether or not, under the circumstances, the application is to be made.

In these cases, the practitioner will often direct that the patient's fauces should be painted, the last thing at night, by the nurse. For this purpose, at the present day, Cocain is largely employed in combination with Morphia or some other powerful sedative. Glycerine is frequently added, both to such applications and to gargles, in order that the drug employed may adhere to the surface of the fauces instead of speedily evaporating, and thus its good effect is maintained instead of being lost at once; and it is well to remember that glycerine has a further use of its own, in consequence of its great power of sucking up fluid from the tissues to which it is applied. On the throat, for example, it causes a serous drain from the blood vessels of the fauces, and so materially relieves the congestion which is both the result of the cough, and to a large extent the cause of the irritability of the mucous membrane, which increases the cough, in many cases of phthisis.

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