

The Nursing of Children's Diseases.

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LECTURE VIII. CONGENITAL SYPHILIS.

This disease is the result of the poison of syphilis in either the father or mother, or both. In such cases the mother often has one or more premature births, then possibly an infant born dead at full term. A child born alive may appear well-nourished and healthy at birth, or may be puny with flabby skin, the colour of *café au lait*, and in some cases they are born with an eruption on the palms of the hands and soles of the feet like large blisters. These children often die. The first definite symptoms come out as a rule about the second month of life. The child becomes restless and irritable, and often has vomiting and diarrhoea; he gets what is thought to be a cold in the head, and owing to nasal obstruction he "snuffles" in breathing. Then appears a patchy, dull-red and shiny rash often all over the body, the colour soon fading to a coppery tint. The corners of the mouth may be ulcerated and cracked, and these healing leave permanent radiating scars. White raised patches called "mucous tubercles" may be seen round the anus, vulva, or mouth, and other parts where the skin is moist. There may be tenderness and swelling of the ends of the bones. The cry gets hoarse, and the child wastes and becomes anæmic. The child may die during this period, but if well treated and cared for the symptoms may disappear in a few weeks, and the child remains comparatively free of symptoms till about puberty, when there may be various kinds of bone disease, rashes, or ulcerations of the skin, and affections of the eyes, or diseases of the internal organs, such as the liver.

As regards the nursing of cases of hereditary syphilis, one of the first points is care in feeding. These children are liable to attacks of diarrhoea and dyspepsia, and so have to be fed with extreme care. If possible the child should be suckled by its mother, but if this be not possible the child must be artificially fed, as a wet nurse may easily contract the disease while

nursing, owing to the nasal or other secretion coming into contact with microscopic cracks or soreness of the nipple. The rash round the anus and buttocks may be simply dusted with boracic acid powder or oxide of zinc, one part to three parts of starch. For the cracks on the lips no doubt the medical attendant will give an ointment containing mercury, such as the red oxide of mercury ointment, which should be applied at night. Mercury may be ordered by inunction, that is the child must be rubbed with mercurial ointment in the axillæ and groins till a certain amount has been rubbed into the skin; or it may be given as a bath in which ten grains of corrosive sublimate have been dissolved. In this case the nurse should take extreme care that none of the fluid enters the child's mouth, as corrosive sublimate is a deadly poison. During mercurial treatment the mouth should be kept scrupulously clean, and the gums may be rubbed with the finger dipped in powdered alum, or, in older children with teeth, a toothbrush may be used with the alum powder. The diet may be supplemented with cod liver oil, with addition of iron to counteract the anæmia which is generally present, and abundance of fresh air must be given. Syphilis is contagious, and so great care must be taken that other persons do not contract the disease, as they may do from spoons, cups, towels and other objects which may have been contaminated by the secretions, hence such things should be kept exclusively for the child affected, and not be used by others.

Tuberculosis.—This means an infection of the body by the tubercle bacillus. This organism has been already mentioned as the cause of pulmonary consumption, and also as the cause of one variety of inflammation of the bowels, but it may affect many other or nearly all the organs of the body, causing other symptoms dependent upon which part of the body is most affected.

The organism may gain access to the body in various ways, by the respiratory organs, by the gastro-intestinal tract and by the tonsils. In the most common cases an affection of the glands of the neck precedes the other symptoms which may be due either to direct extension of the tuberculous process, or to dissemination by the lymphatic or the blood vessels, and through these latter the disease may be carried to a distant part of the body, such as the bones, joints, brain, skin, etc.

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