

Medical Matters.

THE TREATMENT OF TÆNIA.

Dr. J. Kingston Fowler, M.A., F.R.C.P., Senior Physician to the Middlesex Hospital, contributes the following interesting article on the Treatment of Tænia to a recent issue of the *British Medical Journal* :—

The method of treatment here described has been followed for some years in my wards at the Middlesex Hospital, and although it differs only in details from that generally recommended it may be worth recording, as the results appear to be somewhat more favourable than are usually obtained.

The routine method in vogue in the out-patient department years ago was only rarely successful, but since it has become the custom to admit these cases to the wards, failure has been as rare as success was formerly. The method is as follows :—

1. The patient is kept in bed.
2. For two or three, or in some cases four, days the patient is given a diet consisting of beef tea two pints, Mason's essence one tin, two rusks, and port wine 4 oz. During the same period the patient takes tabloids of cascara sagrada (2 gr.) three times daily.

3. On the fourth day (usually) at 5 a.m. haustus sennae co. 1 oz. ; at 9 a.m. a capsule containing 15 min. of the extract of male fern ; at 9.15 ditto ; at 9.30 ditto ; at 9.45 ditto ; at 11 a.m. haustus sennae co. 1 oz. If by 1 p.m. the worm has not been passed and the head found, a second course of treatment with male fern at intervals of fifteen minutes is begun ; to be followed in an hour by a purgative draught. If the head is not found a third course of treatment is prescribed.

It is rarely advisable to continue the treatment beyond this without an interval of a day, as the patient may be somewhat exhausted.

In Case 18 the head was not found until the treatment had been repeated four times, and in Case 12 the treatment was repeated six times. In the latter case, although the head was not found, the patient was cured, as he had not passed any segments when heard from seventeen weeks later.

In the first eight cases the treatment was as described above, but, in addition, a single dose of 1 dr. of extract of male fern was given after the four doses at fifteen minutes' interval. As this was subsequently found to be unnecessary, it was omitted.

Having regard to the prolonged duration of

the affection in many of the cases and to the frequent failures of previous attempts to dislodge the parasite, it may fairly be claimed for this method that it presents advantages over that which is apparently still generally adopted.

The chief points of difference are :—

1. *Complete Rest in Bed.*—It is not advisable for patients taking such an inadequate diet as is necessary to continue at their ordinary occupation.

2. *Prolonged Period of Restricted Diet.*—The usual instructions given to out-patients were to eat no solid food after mid-day and to take the draught prescribed on the following morning ; this to be followed by a purgative an hour later. The following, which is taken from a well-known textbook of therapeutics, shows that this method is still approved :—

The oil (male fern) should be given in the morning on an empty stomach, the bowels having previously been evacuated. At noon an ordinary meal may be taken, and in the evening a brisk purge.

To ensure that the bowels shall be as nearly empty as possible when the vermicide is administered, it is necessary that a diet which leaves little solid residue shall have been taken for some days, and that for the same period a laxative, such as cascara sagrada, which is said to act most efficaciously when given in small and repeated doses, should be used. The duration of the period of restricted diet depends upon the strength of the patient.

3. *The Method of Administering the Vermicide.*—If a single dose is given, it is conceivable that it may pass rapidly over the worm and fail to destroy it, whereas it is possible that the prolonged action of repeated doses is more effective. The nauseous taste of the drug is avoided by the use of capsules.

4. *The Search for the Head of the Worm.*—As the worm usually breaks at a distance of about 1½ in. from the head, and as the portion left is an exceedingly slender filament, a very careful search is necessary to find it. To facilitate this, the pan into which the motion is passed should be covered with black crape, as against this the fine white filament terminating in the head is more readily seen.

It will be observed that the head of the worm was found in seventeen out of the twenty-two cases, and that a cure was certainly effected in two out of the remaining five cases, 86 per cent. in all.

The other three patients have changed their address and have been lost sight of, but as they were instructed to report themselves if not cured and have not done so, it is probable that the treatment was effective in those cases also.



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