

To nurses in their work, the tuberculosis problem at times appears of such far reaching urgency as to outweigh all others. Especially are those concerned in district work confronted on all sides with the evil effects of this preventable disease. They will await with interest therefore the reports in which will be embodied the last expert word on this subject.

## Medical Matters.

### THE OIL RUB.

The anointing of the body with oil is a very ancient custom, and is frequently mentioned by Bible writers. Among the Romans, says Dr. Franklin Richards, it was the common practice to have the body rubbed with oil after the bath, and by this means the skin was kept soft, the muscles pliable, and the general elasticity of youth was long retained. The practice of oil rubbing is still in vogue among the natives of Africa, also in Samoa and other South Sea Islands. Oil rubbing is a pleasant, health-promoting procedure, which may be advantageously employed during health as well as in disease. The application is best made after a warm or tepid bath, as the skin then more readily absorbs the oil. The application of oil to the dry, unwashed skin is not a pleasant procedure. The oil used should be pure and clean, and care should be exercised that not too much is applied. Any surplus oil should be removed with a soft towel.

The oil should be applied to a part at a time with long sweeping strokes, then thoroughly rubbed in with shorter, circular strokes. A knowledge of the movements of massage makes the treatment more agreeable and effectual. The rubbing should not be so vigorous as to produce perspiration. The best oil to be used is pure olive or coconut; cotton-seed oil may also be used. Animal fats are very inferior. The benefits derived from oil rubbing are not due to the rubbing itself. Friction applied to the skin acts beneficially by promoting the absorption of exudates, and encouraging the flow of blood and lymph through the part.

The use of oil by the natives in tropical countries is based upon the fact that the oiled skin radiates heat more rapidly than the dry skin. When little or no clothing is worn, the body is thus cooled by increased radiation. When the oiled surface of the body is covered with clothing, warmth is increased. This fact is taken advantage of by the natives in cold

countries. It is also of practical importance in the prevention of colds after warm bathing.

When daily baths are taken it is well to apply a little oil to the skin two or three times a week, especially in cold weather. After the soap shampoo or vigorous forms of friction, such as the salt glow, the oil rub is indicated. Vigorous rubbing of the legs and feet with oil may be employed for the relief of cold feet, the circulation being permanently improved by this treatment.

Dyspeptics, neurasthenics, and many other chronic invalids are benefited by the oil rub employed daily, or several times weekly. Marked and most favourable effects upon nutrition result from oil rubbing, in the treatment of emaciated infants and children. Warm olive oil is, as a rule, more effective in the treatment of rheumatic joints and muscles than the much advertised liniments recommended in these cases. It should always be borne in mind that it is the rubbing rather than the liniment which gives relief. The oil rub prevents the scattering of infectious scales in scarlet fever and measles. A few drops of kresol or other disinfectant should be added to a dessertspoonful of oil for use in these cases. Oil rubbing is indicated for dryness of the skin and scalp. In cases of dandruff, or scurf, a few drops of oil mixed with alcohol makes an excellent application for the scalp.

### TUBERCULOSIS AND THE POOR LAW.

In an interesting article on the above subject, the *British Journal of Tuberculosis* points out that the period during which a consumptive may be considered to be infective varies greatly, but there is good evidence to show that three years may be accepted as a fair average. For the majority of these chronic cases the State does little or nothing. The victims are left to struggle and to suffer, dragging into destitution and disease their families and friends, and only too frequently multiplying the evil by the propagation of delicate and tuberculously-disposed children.

Those who work among the consumptive cases of our metropolitan and provincial hospitals and sanatoria know well the dread which these patients have of the Union infirmary, and their absolute refusal in most cases to resort to Poor Law relief. No satisfactory advance towards the elimination of this Great White Plague can be effected until rational means are found for the effective segregation and proper care of those infectious consumptive cases for whom no other aid is possible than that which should, and must be, provided by the State.

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