

An exception to this, however, exists in the case of poisoning of a wound by such substances as the venom of a snake, or the germs of hydrophobia or tetanus, when it may be advisable to open up the wound freely and char the tissues with a hot iron, or with some destructive disinfectant such as pure carbolic acid, in the hope of killing organisms inside it. In this case, the healing of the wound is of course delayed.

So much for preventive treatment. What are we to do now when infection has already taken place? Three things are necessary. We require to relieve the sufferings of the patient, to limit the area of the battlefield, and to help the patient's fighting army as much as possible.

The first two are comprised in the treatment of inflammation. We allay the local pain and swelling by the application of hot fomentations, or sometimes, preferably, of ice bags, and above all, by securing absolute rest to the part by fixing it in some form of supporting bandage or splint. The fomentations may often be made with some form of sedative lotion, such as that composed of lead and opium. When the signs point to the presence of pus, it is let out by incisions into the part, so that the spread of infection may be stayed. In the case of cellulitis, free incisions are made through the skin into the loose tissue underneath, and antiseptic fomentations are applied until healing is established. Recently considerable success has been obtained by applying a constricting band on the side of the inflamed part which is nearest to the patient's heart, so that the blood is pent up to a certain extent, thus allowing the patient's white blood cells to have rather better access to and more prolonged contact with the organisms. When this is not possible, as in the case of a wound on the trunk, the same effect is produced by applying suction with an inverted glass vessel connected with a small air pump. This is known as Bier's method, after its inventor.

Usually it is not necessary or desirable to treat the fever which accompanies wound infection in itself, but if the temperature be very high it may be reduced, preferably by tepid or cold sponging. It is, of course, better to treat the cause of the temperature—namely, the infected wound—than the pyrexia itself. It may be necessary to relieve pain which is so severe as to interfere with sleep, by such drugs as opium or morphia, given internally.

In addition to the treatment of the wound and the discomfort attending it, we endeavour also to help the patient's own tissues, and we can

do this in two ways, by assisting him to form fresh leucocytes (or to strengthen those already present), and also to get rid of toxins that have been formed and have got into the general circulation. For the former we support his strength by careful feeding, which resolves itself into the administration of easily digested and palatable nourishment at frequent intervals and in small quantities, and it is sometimes advisable to give stimulants also, and later on tonics. For the latter we give large quantities of fluid by the mouth in the form of palatable drinks, so as to flush the kidneys, and help them in their work of picking the toxins out of the blood, and we also secure free action of the bowels by suitable aperients. Calomel is particularly useful in this connection, as it also stimulates the liver, which plays an important part in the destruction of toxins in the blood.

In severe cases, our sheet anchor lies in the administration of saline solutions under the skin. These have a twofold action, they directly stimulate the body to the production of fresh white cells, and they also help the kidneys to remove toxins. The solution is run in from a reservoir through a needle which is thrust into the loose tissue in the axilla or underneath the breasts.

Unfortunately we have no true antitoxin for the germs which are usually responsible for wound infections, so we cannot neutralise circulating poison directly, except in the case of certain infections such as anthrax or tetanus, when we give antitoxins prepared from these organisms. In some cases, however, where the infection is well localised to the wound and there is not much systemic disturbance, a vaccine may be employed. This consists in the injection under the skin of a measured number of dead germs—which have been preferably obtained from the wound itself—and it acts by stimulating the white cells to further activity, so that they form fresh antitoxin and poison the living organisms which are already in the wound. In certain cases very good results have been obtained from this method of treatment.

ROYALTY AT THE INFANTS' HOSPITAL.

The Duchess of Albany paid a visit to the Infants' Hospital, Vincent Square, on the 25th ult., and expressed herself charmed with its arrangements. The Mercers Company have sent £50 to the funds.

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