

WHAT NURSES SHOULD KNOW ABOUT TREATMENT WITH SERUMS, VACCINES, TOXINS, AND PHYLACOGENS.*

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I have been requested to give you a general talk on serums, vaccines, toxins, and phylacogens. My plan is to arouse your interest and wonder in these marvellous therapeutic agents, point out some of the practical points of interest and value to our profession, and give a few reasons why we should take up the serious, intelligent, consecutive study of these new remedies.

Bacteriology, that wonderfully fascinating branch of the science and art of medicine, now embraces a vast fund of information that has been accumulating for many years, but it is only within the last twenty years that the application of these facts and discoveries has been made in the prevention and cure of disease. First came vaccine virus; then anti-diphtheric serum, with both of which you have long been familiar. Soon came other sera vaccines, and quite recently the phylacogens. Of these latter I will speak more in detail, as I have had greater experience with them.

In the last few months I have noticed a number of articles in the lay press, which indicate the extent to which observing lay writers have been impressed with the results obtained in the prevention and cure of disease by the use of bacterial derivatives. One article, entitled "The Struggle for Immunity," appeared in *Harper's Monthly*, December, 1911; another, equally interesting and well written, entitled "Our Struggle with Germs," was published in the *Literary Digest*, December, 1911.

The inference to be drawn from these is that the general public is already noticing, soon it will be interested, and before long it will demand to be treated with these remedies. If laymen are already acquiring a noticeable degree of confidence in the results that accrue from the use of the bacterial derivatives in the prevention and cure of disease, what must be the belief of the best-informed medical research workers? Naturally, they are very conservative in expressing themselves on paper, but there is no doubt that many of these men believe it will be possible to cure pneumonia, typhoid, influenza, erysipelas, scarlet fever, measles, whooping-cough, rheumatism,

asthma, tuberculosis, and other acute and chronic infectious diseases.

Let me assure you that a cure with a bacterial derivative, especially a phylacogen, is a cure in the true sense of the word—in a large percentage of cases a marvellous cure; grave cases that are beyond the reach of ordinary methods are saved, severe cases are cured promptly, and ordinary and mild cases are cured so quickly as to be dramatic; relapses and complications occur but seldom, sequelæ are prevented, and the patient has been at the same time fortified against a number of morbid conditions due to bacteria.

What chance has the ordinary pharmaceutical agent against this class of remedies? Think it over. Personally, I have seen some most excellent cures obtained with the bacterial derivatives after all other approved, up-to-date methods have produced little or no improvement. I firmly believe that the next few years will show a universal adoption of the biologics in treatment of many acute and chronic diseases, so it seems reasonable to me to forecast that with this development the biologics will constitute at least 50 per cent. of the therapeutic agents used by doctors. The importance, therefore, of beginning early to learn something of the real facts concerning these preparations must be apparent to you all.

I urge all nurses to acquire a working knowledge, that they may intelligently co-operate with the physician when he is employing these wonderful therapeutic agents. I do not hesitate to say that less than 10 per cent. of the professional nurses know the nature of a serum, vaccine, toxin, and phylacogen. You may answer that these remedies are new; there is plenty of time. I grant they are new, but their use is growing so rapidly that their general employment by doctors is assured, and now is the time to begin getting acquainted with these preparations and learning their various features, that you may understand fully their rational application when these products come up for discussion in the regular routine of your professional duties.

Our profession is fully capable of acquiring a working knowledge of the practical points in the clinical use of these agents, and we should lose no time in doing so if we are to keep abreast of the new ideas and methods of treating disease. This means careful, well-directed, consecutive study. What is necessary for the nurse to know, and what is practical and easy for her to learn that she may intelligently serve the physician when he is treating a case with the bacterial derivatives?

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[previous page](#)

[next page](#)