

OUR PRIZE COMPETITION.

WHAT ACCIDENTS TO PATIENTS MOST OFTEN OCCUR IN THE WARDS? HOW WOULD YOU PREVENT THEM?

We have pleasure in awarding the prize this week to Miss L. C. Cooper, Westminster Infirmary, Colindale Avenue, Hendon, N.W.

PRIZE PAPER.

Almost all accidents that occur to our ward patients are preventable.

This is a strong statement to make, but a little reflection will tend to convince even the most careful nurse how true it is.

BURNING WITH HOT-WATER BOTTLES.

The most easily prevented, but at the same time not of very uncommon occurrence, is the burning of patients with hot-water bottles. A hot-water bottle should always be fastened securely in a flannel bag after ascertaining that the screw stopper is properly fastened and no leakage taking place, and in the case of unconscious, paralytic, or helpless patients and infants, it should not be quite close, but a blanket should be placed between bottle and patient.

ACCIDENTS BY BURNING,

to prevent which all ward fires should be protected by guards; no helpless or epileptic patient should be placed too near the fire; nothing inflammable should be placed where it can fall, be knocked or blown into the fire. Chimneys should be frequently cleaned, to prevent their catching fire.

ACCIDENTS IN THE BATHROOM.

Accidents by scalding may occur in the bathroom. This can be prevented by making a practice of first turning on the cold water tap, always testing the temperature of bath before placing the patient in, and by removing the key from tap while patient is in the bath. When patients are helping in the ward kitchen, the danger lies with the kettles on the stove. Accidents by drowning might occur in the bathroom, and a patient should never be left in the bath alone, or even in the bathroom when there is water in bath; buckets or baths of water should never be left in places where a child can fall into them.

FALLING FROM WINDOWS.

Windows should not be opened wide from the bottom; if a patient in delirium, or acting on an impulse, were to try to throw himself from the window, the little noise and delay necessary to throw up the window should be enough to give the nurse sufficient warning to be able to prevent this rather frequent and deplorable accident.

CHOKING.

Accidents from choking might occur, especially amongst old and paralytic patients. To prevent this, care must be taken that the food is suitably prepared; where possible, patients should have their shoulders well raised whilst feeding or being fed; where this is not possible, turn the patient a little on his side.

Patients subject to fits of any kind should be under special observation, especially at night; there is the danger of the tongue being drawn to back of throat and causing suffocation.

MISUSE OF POISONS.

Other accidents may occur by poisons being left about and a patient getting hold of and drinking them, either intentionally or in ignorance. Poisons should always be in specialised bottles, and kept locked up quite apart from medicines of any kind, to prevent accidentally pouring out a poison instead of a medicine. To prevent any accident in the giving of medicines, always read the prescription each time of giving, and give correct dose at correct time.

SPIRIT LAMPS.

Accidents may occur when a spirit stove is in use in the ward, either for tent, hot air, or vapour bath, or even in the testing of urine. To prevent as far as possible any kind of accident, always see that the stove when alight is a safe distance from bed hangings, and sufficient air between flame and bottom of kettle to prevent the heat being driven into bowl of lamp, thus causing it to explode; and in filling, always take the stove out of ward, place on a tray to fill, and wipe the outside thoroughly with a damp cloth, so that no spirit is left to ignite when lighting up again.

FRACTURES FROM FALLS.

Accidents may occur to feeble patients from falls, causing fractures. These can be prevented frequently by careful observation and help on the part of the nurse. Ward floors should not be too highly polished.

SURGICAL INSTRUMENTS.

Surgical instruments should always be kept locked away; and in mental wards, knives, scissors, or anything that might prove a weapon in a patient's hand should be kept out of reach.

HONOURABLE MENTION.

The following competitors receive honourable mention:—Miss S. O. Walford, Miss E. James, Miss M. Roberts, Miss F. Gould, and Miss K. Kohler.

QUESTION FOR NEXT WEEK.

Describe (a) the symptoms and (b) the nursing of cerebro-spinal fever.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)