

OUR PRIZE COMPETITION.

GIVE DIRECTIONS FOR GIVING MEDICINE SO AS TO PREVENT ACCIDENTS.

We have pleasure in awarding the prize this week to Miss J. G. Gilchrist, Gillespie Crescent, Edinburgh.

PRIZE PAPER.

Three essential qualifications required in those who have the responsibility of giving medicine are:—(a) Accuracy in methods of administration; (b) knowledge of the nature of medicine given; (c) observation of its effect upon the patient to whom it is given.

(a) In giving medicine by mouth the directions on the label, which should include name, dose, and time, should be carefully read each time of giving; the medicine well shaken before pouring out, otherwise the proper dose in a mixture would not be given, and a disproportion of one drug would be left at the bottom of the bottle, with disastrous results later on; the exact dose should be poured into a perfectly clean, well-marked measure glass, the label side of the bottle held upwards to prevent soiling the directions; in giving drop medicines, a minim measure must be used, a safe and convenient method when only one or two drops are ordered is to measure ten drops, make up with water to five drachms, when each drachm will contain two drops of the medicine required; the patient must not be left till the medicine is taken. The measure glass should be at once washed and sterilized, and the medicine bottle returned to its proper place, as if left within sight and reach of a child or demented patient, the disaster of poisoning or death might result.

In giving hypodermic injections, the syringe should be in perfect working order, the needle neither blunted or blocked; sterilized immediately before use, as a dirty needle might cause an abscess; all air expelled from the syringe, which should have a regulator; if not, the exact dose only must remain in the syringe before it is given, and a second person observe and check the measured dose, and should also watch the patient, who, if obstreperous or startled with the stab of the needle, might lead to its being broken, or may be driven into a vein, and, as highly concentrated drugs are used in this way, the effect on the heart might produce alarming symptoms. After using, syringe should be at once emptied, cleaned, and put away ready for use.

In giving medicated or vapour baths and inhalations, the patient must be protected against the danger of burning or scalding, and must not be left alone during the process, in

case of faintness. A nozzle of a bronchitis kettle should have a drip tin or shield to protect patient from drops. Lamps used for kettles and vapour baths should be secure in their stands and carefully filled to avoid a flare from overflow of spirit when lit.

(b) An intelligent knowledge as regards the action of medicines, and abbreviated terms in use should be known, such as *Semel*=once; *S.O.S.*=if necessary; *P.R.N.*=when occasion arises; *A.C.*=before food; *P.C.*=after food; and so on. Drugs such as iron and arsenic are given after food on a full stomach, as they have too irritating an effect otherwise. Cod liver oil and tonic mixtures usually twenty minutes after food to avoid nausea and vomiting. Those which stimulate appetite, such as quinine, one hour before food. It should be remembered that some patients have an idiosyncrasy towards certain drugs, the opposite effect being produced from that intended, when a further dose should be withheld and the medical practitioner informed; also that children bear certain drugs, such as opium, badly.

(c) The habit of observation of the effect of the medicine on the patient should be always practised, as even when small doses are administered untoward symptoms may speedily arise in a susceptible patient. Symptoms of overdose of potent drugs, such as arsenic, digitalis, mercury, opium, and others which have an accumulative effect in the system, should be at once notified, the onset and nature of symptoms being noted down at time of occurrence.

There should be method in the keeping of medicines. Those for external use, such as liniments and lotions, should be kept in a separate cupboard or distinctly apart from medicines proper which are introduced by mouth or direct means into the system. All poisonous and highly concentrated drugs should be kept under lock and key, and after use should be immediately replaced.

Drugs which are liable to decompose or keep badly should not be stored up, and used without testing whether they are properly clear and aseptic, especially those used for hypodermic injections.

HONOURABLE MENTION.

The following competitors receive honourable mention:—Miss E. O. Halford, Miss E. Brodie, Mrs. Farthing, Miss L. C. Cooper, Miss D. Vine, Miss E. E. Hall, Miss M. Cullen.

QUESTION FOR NEXT WEEK.

What is intestinal colic? What are the common causes? What is the usual treatment?

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