

OUR PRIZE COMPETITION.

WHAT POINTS SHOULD A NURSE ATTEND TO IN THE GENERAL MANAGEMENT OF A PATIENT SUFFERING FROM VALVULAR DISEASE OF THE HEART?

We have pleasure in awarding the prize this week to Miss Elizabeth Barrodale, Edgeley, Stockport.

PRIZE PAPER.

The points that a nurse should attend to in dealing with a patient suffering from valvular disease of the heart are as follows:—(1) Rest; (2) freedom from worry; (3) light diet; (4) to keep the bowels well opened; (5) (a) the preparation of the skin if tapping is necessary; (b) the care of the canulas, tubes, and surrounding dressings.

(1) The patient should be nursed in the recumbent position, in order to lessen the strain upon the heart. The heart does not beat so often when the body is at rest as it does during any exertion. If, however, there is dyspnoea, as frequently occurs, then a bed-rest should be used. Sometimes a bed-table, sufficiently high for the patient to rest his arms upon and sit leaning forward, is of the greatest comfort to him. It may be padded or have pillows placed upon it, so that his arms do not become sore or easily tired through bearing so much of his weight. During the later stages of the illness, if dropsy occurs it will be found more comfortable to raise the legs upon soft pillows, and to nurse the patient practically sitting upon an air or water pillow.

In nursing such a patient, two nurses are always required to lift him; one nurse cannot possibly manage alone without allowing the patient to exert himself much more than is wise or safe. Great care should also be exercised in giving the bed-pan, for the same reason.

(2) The patient should on no account be worried. The number of visitors allowed should be strictly limited, and only those people admitted who are likely to have a soothing influence upon him. The sick room should be kept quiet and cheerful.

(3) The diet should be light and nourishing. Meat and eggs are not usually allowed. Milk, cream, fish; vegetables as permitted by the medical attendant, as some may cause flatulence, chicken, milk puddings, and fruit are the staple articles of diet, and there are many ways in which these may be prepared in order to give as much nourishment to the system, and as little work to the digestive organs, as possible.

(4) The bowels must be kept well opened, and it is of the utmost importance that the nurse

should see that this is done. Magnesium sulphate and pulv. jalapæ co. are very usual aperients given in these cases.

The object is (1) to prevent any accumulation of fæces in the intestines and consequent accumulation of gases, which would distend the intestines and cause an upward pressure on the heart, thus impeding its action; and (2) to produce a watery evacuation, and thus help to rid the system of the excess of fluid likely to accumulate as a result of the sluggishness of the circulation.

(5) In cases where Southey's tubes or abdominal tapping is resorted to, the nurse must see that the skin is shaved and made surgically clean. She may use acetone, ether and iodine, or any other cleansing agent which the doctor may prefer. She must see that the canulas do not become misplaced through the patient's restlessness, that the skin is kept dry and warm, that the bed is also kept dry, and that the patient's legs and feet are warm. Sometimes when there is a little leakage around the canulas this is difficult, but it is an important point to remember. She must also see that the tubes do not kink anywhere, and that the fluid has a free passage through them. If it should be left to her to remove the canulas, she should apply sterile dressings to the wounds, and dress them as aseptically as possible.

HONOURABLE MENTION.

The following competitors receive honourable mention:—Miss R. Barnes, Miss H. Tong, Miss A. M. M. Cullen, Mrs. J. E. Taylor, Miss E. Macintosh, Miss B. Holloway.

Miss A. Cullen writes:—"Alcohol is sometimes ordered, especially if very urgent symptoms arise, such as sudden faintness and great feebleness of pulse. Brandy may then be given, either by mouth, or in the form of an enema with milk. A nurse may sometimes have to give brandy on her own responsibility if a patient is very collapsed, but the doctor should always be sent for immediately. In nursing a heart case one must always have a cylinder of oxygen at hand. This may afford much relief for the dyspnoea, which is often most troublesome."

QUESTION FOR NEXT WEEK.

Describe briefly the object and effects of vaccination. Describe the method of introducing the lymph, and the stages of development in a successful vaccination.

NOTICE.

Will competitors notice that only **one ounce** can now be sent through the post for **one penny**, and that anything over the ounce costs **one penny**, not a halfpenny, for the **second ounce**?

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