

OUR PRIZE COMPETITION.

WHAT IS HYPER-PYREXIA? WHAT MEANS ARE AVAILABLE FOR ITS REDUCTION?

We have pleasure in awarding the prize this week to Miss E. H. Gibert, Charing Cross Hospital, W.

PRIZE PAPER.

Elevation of temperature is an essential symptom of fever, and as the normal temperature of the body averages about 98° Fahrenheit in the case of adults (though 99°—100° in children), anything above that is classed under the following heads:—

99°—101° slight fever.

103° definite fever.

104° pyrexia; while if

105° and over, *hyper-pyrexia* is the term applied.

The body can survive a temperature of 104° for a short time, but one of 105° or 106° will, if maintained after a period of forty-eight hours, prove a danger to life, as tissues are being destroyed more rapidly than they can be replaced.

Children will endure a raised temperature for a longer time than the old or infirm. In ordinary fevers it is these pathological processes through which the tissues are passing, rather than the actual temperature, which endangers life, and therefore reduction of temperature is only secondary to the treatment of the disease. Therefore the Medical Officer must determine as to which treatment is to receive primary attention.

If the result is reduction of temperature, then the nurse must know at least some of the methods by which this can be accomplished.

Common sense must be displayed and attention to ventilation of the room or ward given; removal of superfluous personal clothing and bed-coverings; all of which will require a certain amount of tact, as the patient frequently complains of feeling cold. Cradling with ice-bags suspended within a few inches over the patient's body, cold or ice-packs, tepid or iced sponging, may be employed. This last process should be carried out at intervals of four hours between each, and effected by means of light strokes, always towards the heart, with a sponge sufficiently wet to allow drops of water to remain on the patient's skin, which can be lightly dabbed after.

Throughout any of these treatments it is essential that the extremities are always warm, and one well-covered hot bottle placed at the feet is generally sufficient for this purpose.

More drastic measures may be taken by lowering the patient into a bedside bath prepared with water T. 98°, and reduced by the addition of ice till cold.

Here the patient must be most carefully watched, and must be immediately removed should any signs of collapse be shown. Before this measure is taken, the directions of the Medical Officer must be obtained, as is of course also necessary for the administration of drugs.

These belong to a class called antipyretics, the chief of them being quinine, salicylates, phenacetin, aspirin, antipyrin, aconite; also alcohol; generally given four hourly in the shape of fluids, pills or tablets. The nurse must know the effect these drugs may have on her patient, and be prepared to treat the condition arising as a result of their administration. Profuse sweating is the most common result, in which case the patient must be rubbed down with a clean and dry towel, personal clothing changed, and bedding if necessary. The hair should be lightly brushed or even combed through, and a warm drink given when all is done, after which the patient will probably fall into a refreshing sleep, on awaking from which the temperature may be discovered to be nearly normal.

Sleep might be almost called one of the most important means for the reduction of temperature, and means therefore to obtain it may be used. Alcohol is one of these, but must only be used according to medical orders.

When the condition is obtained, it is essential that nothing shall disturb it; even other treatments should be held in abeyance to promote its continuance. As, again, sleep depends largely on comfort, it is of the utmost importance that an efficient nurse should always bear in mind how much depends on her and her skill in rendering every service, and giving attention to the smallest detail which shall be the means of gaining that comfort in its very highest degree.

HONOURABLE MENTION.

The following competitors have received honourable mention:—Miss J. D. I. Waugh, Miss E. O. Walford, Miss Adeline Douglas, Miss Lucy C. Cooper, Miss A. M. M. Cullen, Miss D. Roberts, and Miss Mary Bates.

QUESTION FOR NEXT WEEK.

What is the principal source of infective material in (a) pulmonary phthisis, (b) enteric fever, (c) scarlet fever, (d) diphtheria, and (e) chicken pox? State in detail how the discharge in each case should be disinfected.

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