

OUR PRIZE COMPETITION.

TO WHAT USES CAN A NURSE PUT HOT WATER BOTTLES FOR THE CARE AND COMFORT OF PATIENTS? WHAT ARE THE SPECIAL POINTS TO BE OBSERVED IN THEIR APPLICATION?

We have pleasure in awarding the prize this week to Miss Grace A. Tomson, Vernon House, St. Neots, Hunts.

PRIZE PAPER.

Hot water bottles can be used in so many and various ways for the use and comfort of a patient that it is almost difficult to enumerate them all, but from personal experience I have found them invaluable for the following uses:

First and foremost, they are useful in assisting the circulation of the blood by their artificial heat when applied to the body, and perhaps particularly so if applied to the feet.

Pain is often soothed and greatly lessened by the application of one to the affected spot.

Headache is often much relieved if a rubber hot water bottle is applied to the nape of the neck.

In cases where artificial respiration is necessary, the action of the heart is greatly stimulated by the appliance of a rubber one (not too heavily filled) near the heart. After an operation, conducted under an anæsthetic, it is most essential to have at least one or more in fairly close proximity to the patient, to help to restore the natural heat of the body, but great care must be taken that they do not actually touch the skin during the time the patient is unconscious, for at that time he is not sensitive to pain, and the heat of the bottle, if touching the skin, may be causing burns, which may not be discovered till later on when the patient is conscious again and feels the pain. In cases where this has occurred, the patient has often suffered more from the effects of these burns than from the course of the operation itself.

For the first few months of the life of a premature baby a hot water bottle should always be used in its cot and perambulator, care being taken that one or two folds of blanket are placed between it and the child. A healthy child, too, is kept warmer and more comfortable with one used in the same way, though of course it is not such a necessity.

I think the latest use I have made of a hot water bottle was when I had bronchitis badly. Being in lodgings, where there was a great scarcity of coals, it seemed impossible to get sufficient hot water for my requirements; therefore I had my bottle filled with nearly boiling water as often as I could, and then,

taking out the stopper, used it as an inhaler, which purpose it served admirably.

Rubber bottles are far more pleasant and comfortable for using than stone ones, when obtainable, on account of their pliability and adaptability to any part of the body. Care must be taken to ascertain that they do not leak anywhere.

The water for filling them should have boiled, but should not be actually boiling at the moment of using. They should not be quite filled, as that would make them hard and heavy, but certainly they should be three-quarters full, for the smaller the vacuum in the bottle the longer it will keep hot, but take care to gently squeeze out all the air before putting the stopper in, and always keep the bottle in a woollen bag, as this not only ensures the heat being retained much longer, but minimises the risk of the patient getting burnt.

These same rules apply to stone bottles, too, only that they are best made warm first before using, and then quite filled with boiling water. Make quite sure that the screw stopper and washer are in good working order, so that no leakage can occur.

HONOURABLE MENTION.

The following competitors receive honourable mention:—Miss A. Douglas, Miss F. M. Heany, Miss L. D'Oyley Watkins, Miss C. Cowley-Brown, Miss P. Thomson, and Miss M. Matthews.

Miss A. Douglas writes:—"The three main uses of hot water bottles are (1) to maintain warmth, (2) to produce warmth, (3) to alleviate pain. . . . To relieve pain caused by internal congestion, as in indigestion, heat is invaluable, and hot water bottles are the cleanest and easiest way of applying it. The heat draws the blood to the surface, so relieving the congestion."

Miss C. Cowley Brown writes:—"Hot water bottles are a great stand-by for nurses, and all who are helping in illness. Almost all illnesses or accidents call for extra warmth. They are applied (1) for relieving shock, (2) in cases of collapse, (3) warming beds for operation cases, (4) in helping to maintain vitality in premature babies, (5) in cases of hyper-pyrexia when the feet are often very cold, and when it is necessary to relieve the blood pressure on the brain, (6) for drying plaster cases when a fire or other means are not available."

QUESTION FOR NEXT WEEK.

What are the physical defects for which a nurse or midwife should look in washing a newly-born infant? From what do they arise, and what is her duty in regard to each.

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