

OUR PRIZE COMPETITION.

EXPLAIN THE PREPARATION AND MATERIALS NECESSARY FOR THE APPLICATION OF A PLASTER CAST. DESCRIBE THE PROCESS OF APPLYING A BODY CAST, AND THE POINTS TO WHICH THE NURSE WHO ASSISTS THE SURGEON SHOULD PAY SPECIAL ATTENTION.

We have pleasure in awarding the prize this week to Miss Gertrude E. Weeks, Northern Hospital, Winchmore Hill, N.

PRIZE PAPER.

Plaster of Paris.—Amongst the first to use Plaster of Paris were the early Arabian physicians practising in Spain; but to Kluge, of Berlin (1829), belongs the priority of its application to fractures.

The plaster should be of the superior quality used by dentists, and should be dried in the oven for some hours before being used. It may be used to make either removable or irremovable splints, and has been extensively used for making plaster spinal supports.

A number of different materials, such as gauze, crinoline, dextrin gauze, and flannel, may be used as a basis for preparing these casings, but for the smaller ones plaster of paris bandages are generally used.

Making the Bandages.—The dry powdered plaster is rubbed with the palm of the hand into the meshes of a white crinoline muslin bandage of suitable size and length, and then the bandage is loosely rolled up so that the different layers are easily movable on one another. To guard against unrolling, an elastic band is placed round the roll or a pin inserted into the last turn, and then the bandages are wrapped up in oiled paper or guttapercha tissue, or even newspaper, and placed ready for use in an airtight jar, so that all damp is excluded, and deterioration of the plaster by absorption of water is prevented.

Plaster of Paris makes a light and fairly durable jacket, and is the material usually selected for an irremovable casing. When a removable casing is required, however, the plaster is apt to be injured by the constant springing open, and various substitutes have been recommended, such as leather, celluloid, papier mache, and other materials. For the latter form of jacket a mould must be taken of the patient's trunk, from which a cast is made, and on this the jacket is fitted and allowed to dry.

The Application of the Plaster Jacket.—To apply a plaster jacket the patient's clothes are removed, a closely fitting woollen knitted vest reaching from the neck to the knees is applied, and the parts liable to pressure are padded with felt or sheet wadding. The bony parts

are protected, especially the sternum, crests of the iliac bones, and the sacrum, and pressure on the spinous processes is prevented by long pads laid over the summits of these processes on either side of the middle line. The breasts are protected with cotton wool, and in adults a "dinner pad" is placed over the abdomen to allow for distension after meals. All sores or abrasions should be reported to the surgeon.

The patient during the application of a plaster jacket should be placed either in the horizontal or the vertical position.

The surgeon, wearing an overall to protect his clothes, applies the Plaster of Paris bandages, which the nurse has previously placed in a basin of warm water ends up until they have been thoroughly saturated and all bubbles cease to escape. They are then squeezed out fairly dry and applied to the body.

When the first bandage has been nearly applied the nurse places a second in the basin of water, wrings it out, and hands it to the surgeon.

After each bandage has been applied the surface should be smoothed down by the hand, and a certain amount of Plaster of Paris added and rubbed in in order to furnish a smooth surface.

Several bandages are required as a rule, as the case should be four or five folds in thickness throughout, in order to give sufficient rigidity.

The plaster is then exposed to the air and surrounded by hot-water bottles until it sets, or it may be placed in hot-air apparatus for half an hour if one is at hand.

The nurse should be on the watch for obstruction of circulation, pressure on nerves, or the plaster cutting into the flesh.

HONOURABLE MENTION.

The following competitors receive honourable mention:—Miss M. James, Miss J. Robertson, Miss G. Brighthouse.

QUESTION FOR NEXT WEEK.

What are the duties and responsibilities of a Registered Nurse in regard to the forthcoming elections of direct representatives for England and Wales, Scotland, or Ireland?

SMALL POX SPREADING IN LONDON.

Small pox—and some cases of hæmorrhagic severity—is still spreading in London. We hope nurses are thoroughly alive to the danger and are using all their influence to encourage people to be vaccinated. The Ministry of Health has issued an excellent Memorandum on the steps requisite to be taken by sanitary authorities on the occurrence of smallpox.

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