

OUR PRIZE COMPETITION.

IN WHAT WAYS MAY DRUGS BE ADMINISTERED? DESCRIBE THE PROCEDURE IN EACH CASE, AND THE PRINCIPAL PRECAUTIONS TO BE OBSERVED.

We have pleasure in awarding the prize this month to Miss Beth Kennedy, F.B.C.N.; Mary Ward, St. Bartholomew's Hospital, London, E.C.1.

PRIZE PAPER.

Drugs may be administered by:—(1) *Mouth, nose, and artificial opening*, in the form of fluids and emulsions, pills, capsules, tablets, tabloids and powders. Drugs may be administered, added to the fluids given by nasal tube, and by œsophageal tube also in fluid given to a patient after a gastrostomy operation. (2) *Rectum*, by means of fluids and suppositories. (3) *Inunction*, in the form of ointments and liniments rubbed into the skin. (4) *Inhalation*, by means of drugs in hot water, or solution dropped on sponge and inhaled through mouth and nose. (5) *Spraying*, on nasal, pharynx or throat, and for local anæsthetic before operation. (6) *Hypodermically*, or *subcutaneously*. (7) *Intramuscularly*. (8) *Intravenously*. (9) *Intra spinal*. (10) *Drops into eyes*.

(1) *By mouth*.—The nurse must always read the label on the bottle, then shake well, and pour out on the side of bottle opposite to the label. In case of a drug like tincture of opium the amount must be checked by a competent person. When giving castor oil the sides of the glass should be moistened with brandy or lemon juice, and a little put at the bottom. Then pour on the castor oil and add a little brandy or lemon at the top. This should be swallowed in one gulp, and it will slip down easily, without the patient tasting anything. After cod liver oil, if a bite of lemon or a morsel of bread is taken at once, it will clean the tongue and mouth and take away the feeling of nausea.

Pills, capsules, tabloids and tablets are best swallowed with water. Care should be taken to ascertain that pills are quite fresh.

Powders are best shaken on the back of the tongue and swallowed with a drink of water. They can be given to children concealed in a spoonful of jam.

(2) *Rectum*.—When administering drugs by rectum, nurse must be sure the rectum is empty, so that the drug can be absorbed. Fluids are given by means of funnel and catheter. Tincture of opium is often given in this way in $\frac{3}{4}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ of starch mucilage. Suppositories are inserted and held for a little time by pressing on the anus with a swab of wool until the gelatine melts and the drug is absorbed.

(3) *Inunction*.—Drugs, such as mercury, are used in ointment to be rubbed into the skin. A glass spatula should be used, and never the hand in these cases. The nurse should know exactly how much ointment to use—size of a pea, &c.—and each day should select a new place. The ointment should be rubbed in until it is absorbed and a pad put over the part, to keep the grease from getting on to the nightdress or bed clothes.

If a liniment is ordered, the bottle should be stood in warm water to take the chill off; then the nurse rubs it into the painful area until the skin glows. Then a pad of wool should be bandaged into position to keep the heat in.

(4) *Inhalation*.—Water in the proportion of two-thirds boiling to one-third cold should be placed in the inhaler; to this is added the drug ordered, such as Friar's Balsam or Menthol. The inhaler is wrapped in a flannel bag. A cover is put over the patient's head, and he gently breathes in and out.

Inhalation also can be given by means of drugs dropped on a sponge or lint inside an inhaler or respirator, and placed over nose and mouth.

Nurse should count the drops ordered most carefully, as if there is too much moisture on the sponge it might trickle down and burn the patient's mouth.

(5) *Spraying*.—This is used for local anæsthesia on nasal pharynx and throat before operation, when the drug is always administered by the doctor. Cocaine or Novocain is generally used. In some cases of advanced phthisis of larynx the nurse is ordered to spray every four hours. This is when there is great distress, choking and stridor.

(6) *Hypodermically* or *subcutaneously*. (7) *Intramuscularly*. (8) *Intravenously*. The procedure is the same in these three cases. The nurse has the syringe sterile, with suitable needles in each case—the preparatory tray with sterile china, swabs, iodine and ether. The place for injection is chosen, the skin cleaned and the syringe filled and the solution injected, hypodermically into the arm, intramuscularly into the muscle, intravenously into a vein, when a drug is wanted to act very quickly in an emergency.

(9) *Intra-spinal*.—Drugs used for spinal anæsthesia are always administered by the anæsthetist.

(10) *Drops into eyes*.—In the nursing of ophthalmic cases, drugs such as homatropine, cocaine and eserine are used. The nurse raises the top lid and with a pipette drops the solution into the eye. Care must be taken not to allow it to trickle down the cheek.

HONOURABLE MENTION.

The following competitors receive honourable mention:—Miss Henrietta Ballard, M.B.C.N., Miss Amy Phipps, F.B.C.N., Miss P. Thomson.

Miss Henrietta Ballard writes: "For an intramuscular injection a large syringe is used, and an aneurism needle, scapel, ligatures, needle and dressing with bandages must be ready in case of necessity. Usually the vein can be easily raised at elbow by tight clenching of the fist; a tight bandage should be applied above elbow, and the limb flexed and extended alternately for a few minutes, but if not it may be necessary for the surgeon to raise vein by aneurism needle.

"Precautions.—Absolute sterility of instruments, dressing, and site are essential or sepsis may result, with local abscess or general toxæmia."

Miss Amy Phipps writes: "Certain general rules apply to the administration of all drugs, and include the following: All poisons to be kept in a locked cupboard, and quite apart from other preparations; lotions and liniments to be kept separate from medicines. The abbreviated signs for doses, and directions, should be thoroughly familiar to the nurse."

QUESTION FOR NEXT MONTH.

Describe the nursing of a case of influenza. Mention the dangers to be specially guarded against and what may be done to avoid them.

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