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## LECTURE.

### DIET IN DISEASES OF THE NERVOUS SYSTEM.

By Miss D. K. Graham.

Miss Graham very kindly consented to give us a lecture on "Diet in Diseases of the Nervous System" recently; as she was unable to deliver it herself she sent the manuscript to be read.

In dealing with neuralgia it was stated that tea and coffee should be forbidden in chronic neuralgia or where there are frequent attacks. This does not apply to attacks of migraine that are not affected by coffee, or may even be relieved by a cup of hot, strong coffee taken as the attack is about to come on.

Alcohol is frequently a cause of severe neuralgia, often simulating migraine. When no other cause for the disease is found, all alcohol should be forbidden. According to Bowers, vegetarianism may be a cause of neuralgia. In these patients the addition of meat to the diet will give relief. Care and experience alone will help in deciding whether the patient is getting too much food, and whether his diet should be cut down and his elimination increased, or whether the case is dependent on an insufficient or improper diet.

As a general rule, plain wholesome food should be given at regular intervals. The patient should not be allowed to eat between meals. All rich and highly seasoned foods should be forbidden; also all fried foods, pastry and anything known to disagree with the patient. Care should, however, be taken that the diet be not too restricted. True idiosyncrasies for different articles of food are not very common. The excessive use of tobacco may be the cause of neuralgia.

In cases of gastralgia, excesses of alcohol, tea, coffee, sweets and tobacco must be avoided. In some cases, taking of food increases the severity of the attack; there are other cases where pain comes on when the stomach is empty. In these, relief is often afforded by giving a cup of hot milk or beef-tea with a biscuit in the middle of the morning and afternoon and last thing at night on going to bed. If the pain begins in the night from the same cause, a glass of milk should be kept at the bedside, and when the patient is awakened by the pain he may take a few drinks of hot milk. Sufferers from visceral neuralgia should be put to bed and kept on a milk diet.

It was stated that migraine, or sick headache, should not be confused with ordinary neuralgia. The food should be plain, wholesome, and taken at regular intervals; eating between meals should not be allowed. Excesses of all kinds must be studiously avoided. Patients suffering from migraine are apt to attribute the cause of the attack to some article of food. This is not likely to be the case and the patient should not be allowed to cut off first one and then another necessary article of his diet.

Starch indigestion may be present in many of these cases and the nurse must report this without delay to the

physician, as it should receive careful attention. These patients very often get along best on a diet that is largely vegetarian, but this is not so in all cases. Coffee should not be prohibited, for, generally, it is not the cause of the trouble, and in some instances, when taken at the beginning of an attack, it may even afford relief.

In toxic conditions the matter of prime importance is that the stomach should be given absolute rest; if possible alcohol should be withheld entirely. As soon as the stomach will retain fluid, a saline purge is generally ordered. Milk or broth is next to be prescribed, and, as the desire for food returns, a light diet of soft eggs, milk and toast, and the like should be allowed. When the patient is better, all rich and highly seasoned food should be avoided. In the severe forms, the diet should be that prescribed for chronic gastritis. Liquids and broths, together with beef extracts, eggs, barley and rice are given. Milk is useful in most cases. To this list may be added fish, chicken, sweetbread, vegetables in the form of purées, mutton and mashed potatoes.

In all cases fat should be given in an easily digestible form, such as good fresh butter. Saline waters are often useful and alkaline saline waters are especially to be recommended. Water should be taken in small quantities between meals. Alcoholic stimulants should, as a rule, be omitted; when utilised they should be given in small quantities, and are best when diluted with water.

In a general way, small frequent meals are best. In very severe attacks the patient should take as much fluid as possible to flush out the system and the intestinal tract should be thoroughly purged. The food should be given in a partially digested form and at frequent intervals.

Detailed menus were given indicating the kind of food which should be supplied.

### "AT HOME."

Miss Macdonald was "At Home" to Members and friends on Saturday, October 28th, from 4-6 p.m. and a large number of those were able to come, which gave great pleasure to the hostess and members who chanced to be in residence at the Club. The drawing-room looked beautiful as Miss Treasure, with her usual taste and with great generosity, had decorated it with most exquisite flowers. Constantly we heard admiration expressed for the feast of beauty thus provided. Probably it was enjoyed all the more as the guests had come through a heavy rain and the grey skies made the outlook from the drawing-room a dreary one enough.

During the afternoon we enjoyed a very great treat, for Miss Dorothy Clarke, the well-known contralto, sang several beautiful songs. Many expressions of appreciation there were of this wonderful and unexpected pleasure. Miss Clarke is well known and popular at the Club and it was real good fortune that she chanced to be able to come to the "At Home," for we will not soon forget her lovely voice and songs that afternoon.

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