THE PREVENTION AND TREATMENT OF THE COMMON COLD.

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The problem of efficient prophylaxis and treatment of the common cold, apart from its enormous hygienic and commercial importance, is one on which the interest of the Nursing Profession must of necessity be closely focused. The exacting and arduous duties of nurses constantly expose them to the risk of infection at a time when it is difficult to maintain the defensive forces of the body in a state of active vigilance. On the other hand, too, the passing on of a cold from nurse to patient may be fraught with very serious consequences.

For many years experimental work has been proceeding with the object of elucidating this problem. Numerous "remedies" have been suggested, some of which have met with a measure of success, but most of which have been directed towards symptoms rather than underlying causes. It was, therefore, with the object of attacking the problem from the standpoint of first principles, that we have undertaken and brought through the experimental stages a new method of prophylaxis and treatment.

It is necessary first to consider the present position regarding the ætiology of the common cold. Investigations thereinto have revealed that the real causative agent is a very large series or group of organisms. Recent research into this series has resulted in the isolation of over four hundred different organisms, each of which is capable of setting up a violent cold. This significant fact explains at once why partial success only attends efforts to prevent the common cold by means of vaccines. There are large numbers of bacterial preparations, but they all possess the disadvantage of presenting a limited number only of different strains of organisms. Consequently, there is no vaccine available at present which offers the four hundred different strains of organisms already mentioned. Further objections to vaccine therapy and prophylaxis are the unpleasant reactions which usually attend these injections.

In our efforts, therefore, to elaborate an effective preparation that would be a valuable contribution to this urgent problem, we considered the possibility of producing a substance the effect of which would be to stimulate the defence mechanisms of the body in such a way that it would, of itself, produce the requisite anti-substances directed specifically against the invading organisms. Briefly, our aim was *to increase the resistance by artificial stimulation of the defences.*

After a considerable period of preliminary experimental activity, we found that a sulpho-guaiacolic precipitate from the plasma of specially immunised animals had a very definite effect upon persons who were frequently catching colds. This precipitate is available in the form of chocolate-coated tablets, manufactured by Messrs. Harwoods Chemists Ltd., of Watford, under the name of *Serocalcin.* This preparation has been the subject of a growing series of experiments, the results of which now justify its extended use.

The method of administration is as follows: For prophylaxis, two tablets are taken daily for thirty consecutive days; for treatment of a cold already existing, the usual dose is three tablets thrice daily.

The prophylactic course of sixty tablets thus prescribed has been found to give complete protection for a minimum period of four months in 80 per cent. of persons taking the course; while those persons who failed to obtain protection reported that colds were fewer in number, milder, and shorter in duration.

The efficiency of this preventive treatment cannot be better described than in the words used in the Medical Report of a well-known Infants' Hospital:—

"In the autumn of 1934 we treated members of the nursing staff with a course of prophylaxis against the common cold. The results were so good that this autumn the whole resident staff received a course of this prophylactic course, and we are glad to be able to report that so far the results have been eminently satisfactory, and there has been no member of the staff off duty on account of the 'common cold.'"

This is excellent, when one remembers how careful one must be in an infants' hospital to protect the patients from this type of infection. One hears so frequently in the Out-Patient Department such statements as, "I have a cold myself and now the baby is very bad." Too frequently this cold, with its complications, has proved too much for weakly constitutions and ended fatally.

There is no need to emphasise to Nurses the enormous importance of proper protection and the danger of the grave complications which may follow colds, and we feel that this preparation, having successfully passed through its experimental stage, is now worthy of general use, and that the Nursing Profession is in a position to render very valuable assistance in the cause of cold prevention.

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INFLUENZA.

The wave of influenza which now has us in its grip, is mercifully not of a virulent type, but patients must be carefully treated and nursed.

Matrons of hospitals have in consequence a very anxious time, as we learn that hundreds of nurses are victims and are incapacitated from duty just as their services are needed to meet the strain. The same difficulty is also being felt outside hospitals, many private nurses being laid low and off duty.

We wonder if the risk to chills from modern dress and customs has any effect on such an epidemic. Why not try more suitable clothing in this damp winter time? Warm stockings, goloshes, macs, men's umbrellas and a supply of handkerchiefs.

As we travel around all these items appear superfluous, especially "hankies." Cough, sneeze, a hand may be raised and that is all. Showers of germs are thus spluttered around without apology, and apparently one cannot offer a greater insult than to supply the deficiency!

It is an age devoid of good manners, Would that our teachers in conference would talk less of cash and more of *les convenances.*

Influenza has been known from the earliest times, accurate descriptions of it having been recorded by ancient physicians. Epidemics were recorded in Europe in 1403 and in 1557, when the law courts in Paris were closed on account of the ravages of the disease. Since then epidemics and pandemics have occurred at irregular intervals and it continues to this day, sporadically, in varying degrees of intensity and forms of manifestation.

The last great pandemic occurred in 1918, when, according to C. O. Stallybrass ("Principles of Epidemiology"), it "probably killed more persons in its world-wide spread than wounds and other sicknesses together caused among the combatants of the Great War."

The etiology of the disease, however, is still obscure. There is some evidence to show that the infective agent is of the nature of a virus and belongs to the class of those known as the "filter passers."

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