

OUR PRIZE COMPETITION.

WHAT PRECAUTIONS SHOULD BE TAKEN BY A NURSE TO PROTECT HERSELF AND OTHERS AGAINST INFECTION WHEN NURSING (a) ENTERIC; (b) CEREBRO-SPINAL FEVER; (c) GONORRHOEA.

We have pleasure in awarding the prize this month to Miss Amy Phipps, Longmarton, Ashford, Middlesex.

PRIZE PAPER.

The prevention of the spread of infection in all communicable diseases calls for intelligent and skilled attention by a State Registered Nurse with fever training. This is of primary importance.

This should ensure the prompt recognition of the earliest symptoms of the disease in herself or other contacts, and a ready appreciation of the method of transmission and seat of the disease, and also of the laws of prophylaxis and disinfection in infectious illness, and the ability to apply these laws in every detail.

Certain essentials common to methods of prevention in fevers generally include:—

1. The nurse must be in good health, and must take every care to keep so, by taking plenty of good food, fresh air and rest, and by paying particular attention to personal hygiene.

2. She must realise the necessity of reporting any illness in herself or her subordinates, and should instruct the latter to do the same without delay. This is in the patient's interest as much as her own.

3. She must be ready to agree to any of the accredited methods of determining the amount of natural immunity in herself, and to the means of artificial immunisation, and encourage others to do the same. There is still much prejudice against vaccine and serum therapy, and by ready co-operation and tact, the nurse can do a very great deal to influence public opinion in this respect.

4. The nurse must be thorough and conscientious in every detail of both current and terminal disinfection.

In a private house this will call for great tact and patience.

All discharges should be received into paper or containers which can be burnt at once.

Wherever necessary, rubber gloves, face mask and overall should be worn for all treatment.

5. The nurse should see that her own apartments are airy, well cleaned, and baths readily obtainable.

6. If herself a recent patient, she should be ready to offer and encourage other suitable subjects to offer themselves as subjects for the collection of material for therapeutic sera during inter-epidemic periods. She can also do service by doing anything in her power to detect "carriers."

7. Prevention functions in two ways:—

(a) By reducing the number of susceptibles.

(b) By controlling the sources of infection.

The former is achieved mainly by active or passive immunity, produced by vaccine and serum therapy.

The latter is the more difficult. The control of the sources of infection can be effectively organised where the disease is carried by water, foodstuffs, sewage, etc., but it is a far more difficult matter when the respiratory tract is the source of infection, since many of these are highly contagious during the stage of invasion.

In hospitals, cross-infection should be guarded against, and should *not* occur. Although the spread of certain

diseases can be controlled by bed isolation, this does not apply to all. Chamber isolation is the most reliable.

In private houses, a quiet, well-ventilated room, near the bathroom, is desirable; a disinfectant sheet should be hung to remind people of the need for isolation. The details of technique are then identical with chamber nursing. The nurse should take her meals alone, and should watch her own health and that of other contacts.

The three diseases under consideration each call for particular measures of prevention.

1. *Enteric Fever*.—In brief, fingers, fomites, food and flies are the chief agents of transmission. Food means water also, of course.

The incubation period is 10—14 days, and segregation until three successive specimens of stools and urine are found "negative."

During nursing, a special gown should be worn every time the patient is touched. Rubber gloves should be worn, and a reliable hand disinfectant should be used.

The excreta must be covered with disinfectant, closed carefully, and allowed to stand a sufficient time before emptying into the sluice. The bedpan or urine bottle is sterilised after use.

Specimens must be kept in covered sterile containers.

Bed linen must be washed of any faecal matter, and then soaked for some hours in disinfectant before being sent to the laundry. All discharges must be burned at once; feeding vessels must be washed immediately after use, and must be kept exclusively for the patient.

The room must be kept well aired and scrupulously clean.

In the reduction of toxæmia, water is our chief ally, used within and without.

Cerebro-spinal Fever.—The causative agent is the diplococcus intracellularis of Weichselbaum. There are four types of the organism, and therefore polyvalent sera to all four types are usually prepared. The incubation period is probably 2—4 days, segregation period very short.

A mask and gloves should be worn by the nurse during treatment. It should be remembered that the organism may be present in the naso-pharynx of healthy carriers, and spread by droplet infection.

The nurse should take great care in bathing and changing after leaving her patient, and should use a suitable mouthwash and gargle frequently.

Gonorrhœa.—The specific germ (gonococcus) may invade any mucous membrane, the eye and uro-genital tract being particularly vulnerable. Strict isolation is necessary. Gloves must be worn, and the nurse must avoid touching her eyes or mucous membranes. The discharges are highly infective and must be burnt at once. Every care should be taken to prevent soiling of bed linen, etc., and all linens must be disinfected.

The infection frequently persists long after the subsidence of active symptoms, therefore frequent examination of discharges should be made for a long period.

The nurse has an important part to play in helping to control communicable disease for herself, her patient and for the good of the community at large.

QUESTION FOR NEXT MONTH.

What are the predisposing factors in tuberculosis? How can one prevent the spread of infection from an infectious consumptive?

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)