

## Different Nursing in Different Continents.

By Dr. W. Schweisheimer.

### DIFFERENT METHODS OF TAKING CARE OF THE SICK.

Nursing, like music, is international with the basic principles the same everywhere; with each continent and each country, however, having deviations that are interesting yet often confusing.

#### TAKING THE BODY TEMPERATURE.

The simple procedure of taking the body temperature is a case in point. In most countries in Europe, the nurse or doctor takes the patient's temperature by axilla or rectum using a thermometer marked in the degrees of Celsius, commonly called the Centigrade scale. In the United States and other English-speaking countries the temperature is taken by mouth whenever feasible using a thermometer marked in Fahrenheit degrees.

The Fahrenheit mercury thermometer was invented by the German physicist, Gabriel Daniel Fahrenheit, in 1710. It has 180 degrees between the freezing point of water, 32 deg., and the boiling point, 212 deg.

In Europe, in 1743, the scale proposed by Anders Celsius, Swedish astronomer, was early adopted by scientists and subsequently by the medical profession. This scale has an even 100 degrees between the freezing point of water at 0 deg. and the boiling point at 100 deg.

For taking body temperatures, the centigrade thermometer is marked from 35 deg. to 45 deg., as compared to the Fahrenheit marking of 95 deg. to 110 deg., the normal reading of 37 deg. C. being equivalent to 98.6 deg. F.

With the stepped up population movements and the increased travel facilities of the twentieth century, it may be useful or even sometimes necessary to translate temperature readings from one scale to another. Equations have been formulated to express the processes of conversion.

Here is an example. The fever temperature of 40 deg. C. is equivalent to 104 deg. F. According to the formula—

$$\frac{\text{Fahrenheit}-32}{9} = \frac{\text{Celsius}}{5}$$

the degree of Celsius can be figured out this way:—

$$\begin{aligned} C &= 5/9 (F-32) \\ C &= 5/9 (104-32) \\ C &= 5/9 \times 72 \\ C &= 360/9 \\ C &= 40 \text{ deg.} \end{aligned}$$

Or if a centigrade thermometer is used and a reading of 39 deg. C. is obtained, it is converted to the Fahrenheit scale thus:—

$$\begin{aligned} F &= 9/5C. \text{ plus } 32 \\ F &= (9/5 \times 39) \text{ plus } 32 \\ F &= 351/5 \text{ plus } 32 \\ F &= 70.2 \text{ plus } 32 \\ F &= 102.2 \text{ deg.} \end{aligned}$$

It is highly probable that eventually there will be a total international adoption of the centigrade scale which is even now gradually proceeding toward that goal. It may not seem so at first reflection if you are accustomed to the Fahrenheit scale, but the centigrade scale is simpler, less cumbersome and more convenient.

#### ICE BAGS.

The use of the ice bag or ice cap is much more popular in America than in other continents, or rather it used to be. Lately a steadily increasing part of American physicians do not like the ice bag as much as they did in the early decades of the century. Actually the ice bag in the wrong case and place is a dubious matter. Ice applications are used in order to limit inflammation, especially of non-bacterial origin, and in the early stages of injury to diminish bleeding and swelling.

Ice bag and ice compresses have the advantage of producing a mild degree of anesthesia in the sensory nerves and bring relief from pain. This might provoke less attention for the

progress of the pathological process, e.g., in the ear.

The popularity of the ice bag in America is probably due to the fact that ice is easy to get practically in every household while in Europe, Africa, Australia, New Zealand ice boxes and refrigerators are less common than in America. It is more complicated to get ice cubes in those countries than in America. An ice bag though is a double-edged kind of treatment which should not be used without proper indication.

#### ELECTRIC HEAT.

In America, due to the general technical development, electric pads as source of curative heat are most common. These electrically-heated compresses are made of flexible material which conveniently can be adapted to the surface of the body. All sizes are used for nursing, from the small electric pad for the eye to electrically-heated blankets.

Electric pads are used in other continents as well, but they are not as common as in the United States. Hot water bottles, hot compresses, heated bricks or flatirons are widely used. They fulfil their purposes efficiently too though not as conveniently as electrically-heated compresses do.

In America electric treatments and apparatus are frequently advertised through radio and newspapers and magazines.

American families can easily be convinced that by buying apparatus for home-diathermy, short-wave treatment, heat radiated from electric lamps, etc., they will gain advantage to the health of all members of the family.

Families in Europe and other continents seem to be much more reluctant in this respect, they prefer to use old-fashioned applications of heat. The reason is probably that such apparatus are comparatively less expensive in America.

#### ICE BEVERAGES.

In America every progressive home has an electric refrigerator, and less elaborate households have at least an icebox which has to be supplied with ice. Americans therefore, are accustomed to iced beverages, ice-cold water, ice-cold milk and fruit juice. Even red wine is drunk in iced form—a thing that would never occur in Europe. Hotels, restaurants and travel agencies consider the desire for ice-cooled beverages the most characteristic trait of the travelling American.

In nursing you meet the same difference. Fever-ridden patients in America would be highly disappointed to get beverages of room temperature, most of them are anxious to get ice-cooled drinks. Sick people, including children, in America drink much colder beverages than in other continents, with the exception of gastrointestinal ailments—and no damage is being produced by this habit.

#### NURSES.

American hospitals and homes suffer from a lack of experienced nurses. There is a much greater need for nurses in American homes because there are much fewer household helpers employed in America than in Europe and other continents. The newcomer to the United States (in South America things are different) is surprised to see how extremely few families of the middle class have household helpers.

In a home where there is such a continuous lack of help, a nurse is almost indispensable when members of the household get sick, or when a baby has been born. There are solutions for emergencies: Nurses are sent by organisations into the homes of the needy; industrial nurses are used to an increasing degree for workers and employees of industrial enterprises, and for their families as well. But undoubtedly the problem of nursing in private American homes has not yet been solved to everybody's satisfaction.

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