

British Medical Journal

THE JOURNAL OF THE BRITISH MEDICAL ASSOCIATION.



Including an Epitome of Current Medical Literature.
WITH SUPPLEMENT.

No. 3444.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 8, 1927.

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therefore, become a matter of strengthening the vertebral column, and, though the treatment recommended by Dr. Forrester-Brown is undoubtedly valuable, very much better results would, Dr. O'Brien thinks, be obtained by encouraging spinal development. He recommends certain physical exercises for this purpose, some of which are already in use in various systems of physical training. The patient is directed to place and support himself for increasing periods of time on his heels and palms only, and, in another exercise, on his neck resting on a support, and on his heels, the legs and body being kept straight. If this second exercise is found impossible, the knees may be bent and the weight of the lower part of the body taken by the legs and soles of the feet. In another exercise the patient in the lateral posture supports his weight on one arm and the palm of his hand, and the side of the corresponding foot. In each exercise the body is held rigid, and no other part than those mentioned touches the ground. Dr. O'Brien adds that if these exercises are taken at least once daily they will cause in time a great increase in the strength of the spinal muscles, followed by that of the osseous structure, if the treatment is started at a sufficiently early age. With improvement in the strength of the vertebral column an increase in that of the trunk walls will result automatically in the great majority of cases. If it does not, a few simple running exercises will soon achieve this, producing a man who is well set up and who holds himself erect.

THE TOOTH-BRUSH.

"H. B. N." writes: The common tooth-brush enters the mouth and scours its crannies once or twice daily, and so may be a grievous source of infection. It may be worse than a contaminated food, for an infected brush used last thing at night may furnish septic germs, which will have a whole night of undisturbed warmth and moisture during which to become implanted. The use of the tooth-brush is growing. School medical inspection, and the generally improved conditions of the population at large, have made its use almost universal. But the methods, or rather lack of methods, of the sale of the article demand speedy amendment. One need only call on any chemist to discover how archaic and nasty is the present-day method of sale. The customer asks for a brush. He is handed a box or glass case with many patterns of brushes and allowed to take his choice. Brush after brush is examined, the thumb is rubbed along the bristles to determine the degree of stiffness and one is chosen. The rest go back into stock, both thumb and unthumb, until another buyer comes along. The purchaser thinks he has bought a new brush, but it may be in truth a second, or third, or *n*th hand brush, already contaminated by much handling. Tooth-brushes should be sold in a strictly hygienic manner, and this casual handling stopped. The buyer of a pencil does not expect to try the lead of his choice before buying: he looks at the mark BB, B, HB, H, or HH, and knows from the sign stamped on the wood of the pencil the texture he wants. Graduations of this sort might be applied more generally to tooth-brushes, and the practice of putting them up for sale in sealed transparent envelopes should be extended. At present only a few of the more expensive kinds are sold in this way. Even so, the buyer will be wise to disinfect a new brush before it is put into use by soaking it in a 5 per cent. solution of carbolic for six hours; then, after a wash in running water for a few minutes, it will be fit for use. In a recent note in the JOURNAL Dr. J. M. MacPhail (December 18th, 1926, p. 1206) questioned whether the dirty, flabby, damp tooth-brushes which he saw too often in the bathrooms and bedrooms of his patients were not more dangerous than no brush at all. There can be no doubt that too little care is given to this useful implement. It is used and dumped into its stand with scarce a thought, and used until the bristles come loose into the mouth and the thing is an annoyance. With a very little care the brush could be kept clean and sweet. Brushes should be chosen that have the tufts of bristles set well apart and not in a close pile; good spacing allows of easy drying. The secret of care is to wash the brush after each usage, strike it smartly (bristle downwards) on to a towel, so as to shake out the water, and then put it in an airy place to dry. Further, it should be given a weekly soak in carbolic solution. Better still would it be (as Mr. A. Annesley Gomes suggests in the JOURNAL of January 1st, p. 46) to have two tooth-brushes in concurrent use, each to be used for one week, turn about. The life of the brushes would be lengthened by this treatment, so cleanliness and economy go hand in hand. The traveller must needs use other methods. For him a long metal box, containing a supply of prepared chalk, should form his tooth-brush container. Into this the brush, after washing and drying on the towel, should be placed and kept between the times of usage, so that he may find a clean and dry brush awaiting him morning and evening, wherever he may be.

CARBON MONOXIDE POISONING ON A SHIP AT SEA.

A CORRESPONDENT sends an account of an oil tanker in ballast which arrived at a foreign port with the captain dead and the first and second engineers ill from carbon monoxide poisoning. He states that in cleaning out the holds in readiness to take a cargo of gasoline the pump had to be taken apart. The second engineer descended to the hold and fell on his back, face upwards. The first engineer heard of the accident, went down, and, as he set foot in the hold, fell similarly, face upwards. The captain, learning of the double casualty, without waiting to put on a gas mask, and being a powerful man, went down at once, but, before reaching the bottom of the ladder, fell under the pump, face downwards. The three men were brought up to the deck in less than ten minutes; the two engineers were bleeding from the nose and mouth. Artificial respiration restored the

engineers after one and a half hours, but the captain appeared to have died instantaneously. The ship had previously carried a cargo of benzene, and our correspondent emphasizes the necessity of the Board of Trade insisting that anybody who enters a tanker's hold should be obliged to wear a gas mask. In this particular instance gas masks were available on the deck, though they were not used. He adds that this occurrence should also serve as a warning that care must be taken when "breaking the pump," which in this case was evidently a death trap.

RESEARCH IN PRIVATE PRACTICE.

In the course of a letter on the possibilities and difficulties of research in private practice a correspondent relates his experience in endeavouring to ascertain which tuberculous patients were benefited by injections of human tuberculin and which by bovine. His criterion was the elimination of organic acid in the urine, and in the experimental work he was much assisted by a keen and trained dispenser, who had better facilities for continuing investigations than the inconvenient accommodation of a consulting-room or small dispensary in a private residence. The financial difficulty was also harassing. Our correspondent believes that more might be done in the way of research by private practitioners if textbooks were more explicit about the present limits of knowledge.

TATTOOING.

At a meeting of the Royal Physical Society in Edinburgh a paper was read by Dr. Douglas Guthrie dealing with "The history and significance of tattooing and other forms of body-marking." The lecturer said that the decoration of the human body by designs was an ancient custom practised in Egypt and among the Inca and Maya civilizations. At the present day tattooing reached its highest level among the Japanese artists. In Europe generally the practice was largely confined to soldiers and sailors, although the designs, which were usually symbols of love, war, and religion, could rarely be regarded as artistic. Professional tattooists now used electrically driven needles, with all the precautions of modern surgical technique. Recently it had been seriously suggested that surgeons should sign their handiwork by tattoo marks on the skin, so that a subsequent operator might know what had already been done. The significance of tattooing among various races had been the subject of much investigation. Crude scars produced by burning or cutting were made by the Australian aborigines and were believed to confer immunity against disease. Scarring was also common in Central Africa to denote the tribe or secret society to which a native belonged. Among fair-skinned races true tattooing with pigments was naturally more effective. It is believed by peoples so far removed as the Eskimo and the Fijian that tattoo marks persisted upon the soul after death and served as a means of identification in the next world. The elaborate facial tattooing known as moko denoted the social position of the bearer among the Maoris. The design of this was of great artistic merit, and the custom of embalming tattooed heads had for a time rendered well tattooed Maoris unsafe, so that the export of heads had been prohibited by the New Zealand Government in 1830. The Rev. S. Nicholson, Scottish Secretary for the London Missionary Society, who had been twenty-five years in India, described the practice of tattooing in South India. Men were tattooed as a cure for rheumatic or other pains, and the Eurasian people were almost invariably tattooed to a considerable extent. Women were to a large extent tattooed, especially on the back of the hand, the calf, the middle of the forehead, cheeks, and chin, and the motive was said to be for a protection against the evil eye. The pigment used was lampblack mixed with milk or water.

WOMEN ON TEACHING HOSPITAL STAFFS.

MR. NORMAN M. DOTT, F.R.C.S.E. (surgeon, Royal Hospital for Sick Children, Edinburgh), writes: I observe that under the heading "Medical News" in your issue of December 25th, 1926, mention is made of the recent appointment of a woman to the full staff of a teaching hospital, and it is stated that this is believed to be the first occasion on which a woman has been made a member of the full staff of a teaching hospital in the British Isles, except in connexion with the Royal Free Hospital, London. In view of this statement it may be of interest to note that in May, 1925, Miss Gertrude Herzfeld was appointed to the full surgical staff of the Royal Edinburgh Hospital for Sick Children.

RENEWAL OF MOTOR LICENCES.

FOR the assistance of owners of private motor cars and motor cycles the Automobile Association is issuing a booklet entitled *Your Motor Tax at a Glance*, which shows the various amounts due for licences, either for the year or shorter periods. Information is also given regarding the allowances obtainable in respect of old cars, refunds for surrendered licences, and the necessary procedure for renewing licences. Motorists can obtain copies, free of charge, upon application by postcard to the Secretary, the Automobile Association, Fannum House, New Coventry Street, London, W.1.

VACANCIES.

NOTIFICATIONS of offices vacant in universities, medical colleges, and of vacant resident and other appointments at hospitals, will be found at pages 35, 36, 37, 40, and 41 of our advertisement columns, and advertisements as to partnerships, assistantships, and locumtenencies at pages 38 and 39.

A short summary of vacant posts notified in the advertisement columns appears in the *Supplement* at page 15.

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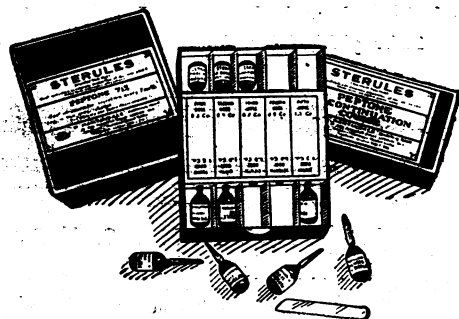
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