A HUNDRED YEARS AGO

Extracted from a 1914 issue of *The Practitioner*

AUTOTHERAPY IN THE PREVENTION AND CURE OF PURULENT INFECTIONS

BY CHARLES H. DUNCAN, M.D.

I believe that spontaneous cure of an infectious disease is due to entrance into the blood-stream of the unmodified toxins, developed in the focus of infection. When this occurs the power of the blood-serum is raised, the activity of the leucocytes stimulated, with the resultant development of specific anti-bodies.

Autotherapy, or the physicans's method of treating the patient, is based upon Nature's method of cure, for by autotherapy the patient is inoculated with unmodified toxic substances, elaborated within his own body by the action of the infectious agents upon his body tissues. In autotherapy, the physician simply inoculates the patient with his own unmodified toxin complex, which may be obtained by filtering the pathogenic exudate of the disease through a Berkefeld filter. The bacteria-free filtrate contains all the toxins from all the micro-organisms, both causative and complicating, that are in the focus of infection, and, when this is injected hypodermically, the same thing occurs as when nature cures, namely, the power of the blood-serum is raised, and the activity of the leucocytes is stimulated by the action of specific anti-bodies to overcome, or combat, all the micro-organisms from which the patient suffers.

"A patient may abort infection by simply chewing his own blood dressings twice daily. This is a fact, and we cannot know too many facts."

As more anti-bodies are developed when toxins are placed in the subcutaneous tissues than when they are introduced into the blood stream, and as by auto-inoculating the patient early, the physician may often "steal a march" on the slow natural method of curing the patient, autotherapy has distinct advantages over the natural method of cure. The unmodified toxin complex, therefore, is the ideal therapeutic agent for treating a patient suffering with any localized, and possibly non-localized, infectious disease.

In all acute infections, in which it is possible to obtain the toxins, a speedy cure may be expected. With few exceptions, all chronic infections are benefited more by the autotherapeutic remedy than by any other curative agent. Autotherapy is being used successfully by hundreds of physicians throughout the United States.

Aseptic technique should always be employed as far as possible. Autoseptic technique should be employed also as an additional element of safety, for if aseptic technique, for reasons little understood at the present time, fails to prevent sepsis, autosepsis would then tend to build up the bactericidal elements of the blood to the infection organisms. In this way the wound is made to heal without infection being apparent.

In one of the large emergency hospitals in New York City, at which I am operating surgeon, abundant opportunity for proving the therapeutic value of the autoseptic method of treating wounds has been afforded. Wounds usually remain free from pus when this treatment is given. Free drainage and autoseptic technique will cause almost any non-fatal wound to heal without infection being apparent. In the last analysis it appears that a patient may abort infection by simply chewing his own blood dressings twice daily. This is a fact, and we cannot know too many facts.

Splinter wound from a rotten board

Case 1 H.R., male , age 45 years, applied for treatment January 29, 1911, at my clinic. In falling, he ran a splinter of wood from a rotten board into the back of his right wrist. It was an inch long, and ½ inch thick.

It was decided to perform an experiment in this instance and the writer asked two of the house staff, Dr Dietrich and Dr Kirsch, to witness it. In this experiment, practically every known rule of modern aseptic surgery was violated and the best results followed. Nothing was cleansed or sterilized. The instruments used were a scalpel, an artery clip, and a pair of forceps. These were taken from a pocket case of one of the assistants and used as they were. The wound was opened with the scalpel, after a futile effort to withdraw the splinter with the forceps and artery clip; it was taken away piecemeal. Time consumed was about ten minutes. First, the wound was not washed or made sterile; secondly, the surgeon's hands were not sterile; third, the instruments were not sterile; fourth, the needle and suture were not sterile; fifth, the gauze coving the wound was not sterile; sixth, the wound was placed in the unsterile mouth.

After the sliver was removed, the patient was told to suck the wound vigorously for five minutes. Then a very superficial suture of silk-worm gut was put in place, but the skin flaps were not drawn tightly. A flap of unsterile gauze was placed over the wound and held with a piece of tape. The tape was tied in a bow knot, and the patient was instructed to loosen it and suck the wound every few minutes, especially when he felt any tickling or irritation in it. He was told to return to the clinic at any time it gave him trouble, but to return at any rate in six days to have the suture removed. He did not return for two weeks, and an orderly was sent to see why he did not return. He stated the reason was, "There was no necessity for returning , that the would healed all right." He was told to return and have the suture removed. He said, " That's all right, I took that out with my jack knife."

Dog-catchers

In further substantiating my claim to be able to abate sepsis by simply placing the fresh wound or the discharge from a fresh wound in the mouth, I visited the dog-catching station at East 102nd Street and East River. It is believed the bite from any animal is liable to result in purulent infection and possibly tetanus, and any neglect to cleanse thoroughly or cauterize the bite of any animal invites infection. These dog-catchers never have purulent infection, tetanus, or hydrophobia following their bites when they are able to get the wound in the mouth; they suck their wounds the first thing when bitten.

1868-2014
Supporting general practitioners for 146 years