



THE MIDWIVES' UNION SECTION

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Members are asked to report any helpful notes of cases, and send articles for this section to the Secretary.

Analgesia in Labour

What do we mean by analgesia? In most dictionaries we find the definition as follows:—Analgesia means 'insensibility to pain in a part'—and therefore differing from Anæsthesia which is defined as 'loss of all sensibility or feeling.'

With analgesia then we are concerned with the question of giving our patients insensibility to pain without loss of consciousness, which in labour is loss of experience. The woman with true maternal feelings does not want to be unconscious of the birth of her child, which is a triumph after nine months of weary child formation, and possibly ill-health for part of the time, but what she does ask is that 'her pain shall be brought within the limits of her endurance.'

Another question arises, however, in one's mind. 'Is analgesia necessary?' In many cases—no—it is not. We do at times see cases where after 3-5 hours labour—with a few regular and strong pains, a woman will give birth to her child, and this is found in the animal world and in some of the primitive races. Alas, however, such cases are not in the majority, since the higher the civilisation, the greater the sensibility to pain, and the modes and habits of life cause lessening of natural powers. The condition of easy and natural delivery is called 'Eutocia'.

The work of midwives is of vital importance, for in their hands lies the safety of the race. Midwifery work conscientiously and efficiently carried out safeguards the arrival of the future citizens of India, and not only that, but the complete restoration to health again of the mother, who is the very backbone of the country. The power of the midwife is tremendous since it includes the correct reading of signs and symptoms, judgment and skill necessary to protect the lives of both mother and child.

The subject of painless labour has been taken up with vigour recently in England, with the result that the National Birthday Trust Fund are issuing free of charge *Chloroform Capsules* to any hospital, if the authorities of which, are willing to make a report on the cases to whom these capsules are administered. The capsules, which for use, are crushed between the fingers, and the fumes inhaled, contain only a few minims of Chloroform and so are comparatively harmless. Whilst of value for

institutions, the opinion appears to be that they will not be of as much use for district midwifery, because a second nurse will be needed for the administration of the chloroform. Whilst chloroform administered in the ordinary method is an anæsthetic—in the capsular form—I feel it may be called an analgesic since the dosage is not sufficient to produce unconsciousness.

Potassium Bromide and Chloral Hydrate given in a dose of grains xx of each in an ounce of water is very useful for women in labour and in need of rest. It has the effect of quietening the nervous system and at the same time it has the power of quickening the dilatation of the *os uteri*. There are no ill-effects from its use.

Opium also can be used in various forms such as Dover's powder, laudanum, or in pill form.

Another analgesic recently has proved its worth, though at the present time it is too expensive for everyday use. It is safe and useful, and consists of *Nembutal with Chloral Hydrate*. The method of administration is as follows:—

A woman is to whom nembutal treatment is to be given must have no pelvic disproportion, and must have normal presentation. The treatment is commenced when the *os* is 2/5th. dilated in either a primi or a multipara. After the usual enema and bath have been given the treatment is begun.

The initial dose is nembutal grains 3 (in 2 capsules) given by mouth followed 10 minutes later by grains xxx of Chloral Hydrate in one ounce of *Syrupus Limonis*.

The first repeat dose is given 2 hours later and consists of nembutal $1\frac{1}{2}$ grains (1 capsule) followed 10 minutes later by grains xxx of Chloral Hydrate in 1 ounce of syrup.

The second repeat dose is given 3 hours later and is nembutal $1\frac{1}{2}$ grains (1 capsule) followed by grains xxx of Chloral Hydrate in syrup, and thereafter every 3 hours until the maximum dose is required.

The total dose of $7\frac{1}{2}$ grains of nembutal and 120 grains of Chloral Hydrate should not be exceeded in 12 hours, but in most cases delivery takes place within this time.

The Effect of the drugs on the patient

The first effect is drowsiness followed by sleep. Some patients awake with the pains, others just rouse up, whilst some do not even move. The majority of women can be roused to answer simple questions—slowly—dropping off to sleep again. Others do not speak. There is no alteration of pulse rate or temperature—no cyanosis. The digestive system does not suffer; neither is there any trouble with the bladder or bowels. The pupils

are moderately dilated and react to light. There is no tendency to haemorrhage.

Precautions

The labour room must be kept as quiet as possible and a nurse must always be in attendance to watch the effect of the treatment and to make notes etc.—a report being kept. In a few instances the effect on the patient has been that of drowsiness and sleep and combined with restlessness which calls for more of the nurse's attention. After the delivery the patients have no recollection of what they have passed through.

The Child

The child does not suffer in any way from the effect of nembutal and Chloral Hydrate administration to the mother.

D. CHADWICK, S.R.N.

30-3-33.

CONTINUED SUCCESS.

At the All India Sanitary and Scientific Exhibition held at Madras at the opening of the year, a Gold Medal and a Certificate of Merit were awarded to Cow & Gate Ltd. of Guildford, England, for their well-known Milk Foods as exhibited by their Agents, Carr & Co. Ltd. The awards were presented by Major General C. A. Sprawson, C.I.E., V.H.S., I.M.S.

The Exhibition was visited by the Governor of Madras, Sir Stanley Jackson, and over 2,000 medical men from all parts of India called at the Cow & Gate stall.

The awards are undoubtedly a tribute to the care and skill with which the Cow & Gate firm are catering for the special requirements of the Indian market and the increasing demand shows that their efforts to provide their nourishing Foods in fresh, safe and perfect condition are appreciated by the public in general.

The importance of pure milk in India both for infants and adults cannot be over-estimated and it is a matter of general regret that actual necessities such as these foods should have recently been subject to an increase in the already high customs duties which are imposed upon them.

(1) WIENER KLINISCHE WOCHENSCHRIFT,

Priv. Doz. Oskar Stracker,

'Zehendeformitäten (Deformities of the toes).

Dr. Stracker discusses the different forms of toe-deformities, their etiology and their treatment. In cases of chronic inflammation of the metatarsophalangeal joint of the great toe, the author calls attention to the possibility of this condition being easily mistaken for arthritis. For its treatment he recommends massage and diathermy, and internally urecedin. In acute onset, local antiphlogistic treatment with Antiphlogistin proved of great value. To lessen the pain when walking, it is recommended that two strips of wood, placed at right angles, be attached to the sole of the shoe in the area of the ball.