

CANCER CONTROL.

THE American Society for the Control of Cancer have published a little pamphlet instructing nurses how they can help towards this end. The Society are anxious to increase the membership among nurses, and all necessary information can be obtained by writing to their offices, 370, Seventh Avenue, New York.

They are "endeavouring to overcome the ignorance and prejudice which in the public mind have so long been associated with cancer and to a considerable extent contributing to the prevalence of this disease, and by disseminating correct knowledge prevent needless suffering and loss of life."

Nurses can give valuable help in the following ways:—

1. By making themselves reliable sources of authentic information with respects to the prevention, recognition, and cure of cancer.
2. By detecting early cases which might otherwise escape recognition until they had passed to an incurable stage.
3. By exerting an intelligent influence upon those who have cancer in its early and curable stages, and inducing them to seek immediate and competent treatment.
4. By using their influence against quack remedies."

The forms of treatment which are recommended by the American Society are surgery and radiation by means of X-rays or radium.

Some of the wrong ideas people have are an unreasoning fear of 'the knife' and ignorance of what scientific surgery is accomplishing every day. Wrong ideas about radium and X-rays and that proprietary remedies are capable of producing remarkable cures in cancer cases. Some right ideas which people should have.

"Among the most useful things which are known about cancer is the fact that chronic irritation is frequently a contributing factor in its causation. To prevent cancer, therefore, is to prevent the irritations which lead to it.

The irritation may be produced in any one of a number of ways. There may be a constant rubbing of clothing upon a raised mole; dirt may become ground into some crease in the flesh where continual movement takes place; a broken tooth may wear upon some part of the mouth or cheek; a person may have the habit of knocking or rubbing some particular part of the body in the ordinary acts of everyday life; a man in shaving may repeatedly cut himself in some particular spot; irritation may be produced by bacterial infection—as, for example, where a focus of infection exists for a long period.

Some persons are more apt to have cancer than others and some are more inclined to have cancer in some particular place than anywhere else. Men are more apt than women to have cancer of the mouth; women are more likely than men to have cancer of the breast.

But eminent cancer specialists generally agree that cancer is not inherited, or contagious, or infectious, or otherwise transmissible among human beings, notwithstanding the fact that instances occur now and then which appear to prove the contrary.

People rarely have cancer under 30 years of age. Above 40 the incidence increases rapidly. On the whole, women have it more often than men. There is less cancer reported in our southern states, and in southern countries generally, than elsewhere. About 100,000 people die of cancer in the United States every year.

There is no test which is capable of showing whether a person is susceptible to cancer or not. There is no blood test which tells whether a person has cancer. Cancer is not a constitutional disease. It is not known to be due to errors in diet. There is no evidence to suggest that it is produced by worry, or smoke, or artificial light, or any conditions peculiar to civilization.

Cancer is a phenomenon of growth. Some of the cells of which the body is composed set up an active, ungovernable, unrestrainable multiplication. Unlike the other cells of the body, they refuse to follow the regulating and limiting control which Nature imposes upon all normal and healthy forms of life. Why they do this is not known, although some of the things which lead them to do so have been discovered: as, for example, irritation.

The following are some of the things which nurses should keep in mind in order to help in the control of cancer.

1. Any continual irritation, particularly in the mouth, such as may be caused by the use of tobacco, or by jagged teeth or poorly fitting plates, may lead to cancer.

2. A lump in the breast may or not be cancer. In either event it is something abnormal and, being such, demands immediate investigation.

3. Any unusual discharge. If a woman is forty years of age or more, a periodic examination once a year by a thoroughly qualified physician is desirable. Particularly is this important if, after the menopause, a discharge again occurs.

4. A bloody discharge from the rectum or bladder should be regarded as possibly due to cancer.

5. Indigestion that cannot be satisfactorily explained may be cancer.

6. A sore on the face, or in the mouth, or anywhere on the skin that does not readily heal—that is, heal when kept clean, and this within two or three weeks—should be investigated by a competent physician. Notwithstanding the fact that all cancers of the skin can be cured if detected early enough, in 1922 over 3,500 people died in the United States as a result of this malady.

7. A wart or mole which changes in size or appearance should arouse suspicion. The patient should be urged to go at once to a good doctor and ascertain the cause.