

Dominion Medical Monthly

And Ontario Medical Journal

Vol. XL.

TORONTO, MAY, 1913.

No. 5

Original Articles

TREATMENT OF DIFFUSE SEPTIC PERITONITIS*

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(Continued from April issue.)

The elevated position of the head and trunk, known as the Fowler position, has now been generally adopted, and a study of the statistics shows that it has greatly reduced the mortality of peritonitis. It considerably facilitates drainage, the fluid tending to fall into the pelvis, the serosa of which absorbs less than that of the subdiaphragmatic region, and it also facilitates respiration. The patient is usually placed in the Fowler position immediately after operation, but many surgeons now recommend that when moving patients suffering from any acute abdominal condition to the hospital they should be placed in the ambulance in a semi-sitting position, should remain in this position until the operation is performed, and of course after the operation until all danger is past.

Mr. H. J. Paterson³² says that in his opinion the Fowler position tends to prevent subdiaphragmatic abscess, whilst Dr. Gerster³³ states that since its adoption at the Mount Sinai Hospital, in 1905, subphrenic abscess has been much more common. In my experience the Fowler position has reduced the tendency to subdiaphragmatic abscess, having only had two cases since its adoption, as against four cases in the same length of time previous to this.

Whilst Dr. Bevan⁶ recognizes the advantages of the Fowler position, he points out that it is advisable not to use it in an unduly exaggerated form. His own practice is to allow the patient to lie flat in bed, whilst the head of the bed is elevated from eighteen to

*Read before the Academy of Medicine, Toronto, Jan. 7th, 1913.