

THE VALUE OF RADIUM IN CURING DISEASE, IN PROLONGING LIFE, AND IN ALLEVIATING DISTRESSING SYMPTOMS*

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During the comparatively short time which has elapsed since radium was first introduced into therapeutics, the treatment has passed through many phases, but it is now being established upon a firm and scientific basis, and is slowly, but surely, extending enormously its field of usefulness. A few brilliant successes in its early days caused it to be hailed by over-enthusiastic advocates as an almost universal panacea; but, on the other hand, a certain number of failures resulted in its unconditional condemnation by some of the more conservative members of the profession, who are invariably inclined to be sceptical in regard to the merits of any new remedy. Further investigation and more extensive experience, however, have shown that for many of these failures radium itself was not to blame. The cause of failure might, almost invariably, be traced to a defective knowledge of its exact characteristics, dosage and method of application. In some instances also success did not result because of an injudicious selection of cases for treatment, for radium, in common with every other method, has its limitations. The absolute necessity of recognizing these, and giving them due consideration, before formulating a definite opinion as to the value of radium treatment, will be obvious. Meanwhile, though the value of new remedies can only be accurately determined by prolonged experience and observation, it is advisable to approach the subject with an open and unbiased mind, and we should not hesitate to avail ourselves of any method which may present itself for removing or alleviating the terrible suffering caused by the diseases with which humanity is liable to be affected. Everyone will agree that cancer is one of the most important of these diseases.

Lack of knowledge as to the proper dosage has been responsible for failure in not a few cases, where either too much or

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