

It is therefore a matter of importance to ascertain whether any real basis exists for the feeling against the use of the bromides, or whether this view is only another instance of popular misconception, of which there are several examples in this disease.

My experience of the treatment of epilepsy extends over some sixteen or eighteen years, during which time I have prescribed for several thousands of epileptics in all stages and varieties of the malady.

I can without hesitation say that the influence of the bromides upon epileptic fits is both variable and uncertain. In a certain proportion of cases, amounting to about 25 per cent., so much benefit is derived that the attacks are either permanently or temporarily arrested. It is probable that the spontaneously curable cases of the disease are found in this group, cases which in the view of some writers are arrested not in consequence of, but in spite of, the remedy. The curable types of epilepsy are recognizable early in the disease, and in them I consider early and persistent use of small doses of the bromides most essential.

In a second group of cases, amounting to a further 25 per cent., some improvement is derived from the administration of the bromides, mainly in the direction of lessening the frequency and severity of the fits. This may be looked upon as the common temporary result of bromide treatment, and is what may with confidence be expected in many cases in the early stages of the disease.

In the remaining group, amounting to about 50 per cent., the bromides either have no influence at all upon the fits or are actually deleterious.

It is therefore obvious that about half the number of epileptics derive no benefit from the administration of the bromides, from which it might be argued that these salts are of little, if indeed any, use in the treatment of epilepsy. On the other hand, there is the 25-50 per cent. which derive great benefit from these drugs, including the 10 or 12 per cent. which are cured.

It is within the experience of most physicians, especially of those working amongst the hospital class, that no complete record can be obtained either of the number arrested or the duration of the arrest, as there is a tendency for the patient to cease attendance once he is relieved of his symptoms.

I hold that it is an error to say that the bromides are of no use in the treatment of epilepsy. If 50 per cent. of the cases derive some benefit from the administration of these drugs, then all cases of recent origin should be given the benefit of the remedy for a time.