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## Original Communications.

### THE UNCERTAINTIES OF DIAGNOSIS AND THE NECESSITY OF EARLY AND VIGOROUS TREATMENT OF DIPHTHERIA.\*

By T. F. McMAHON, M.D.

The death rate from diphtheria in Ontario, as elsewhere, is altogether too high. In 1902, two thousand six hundred and ninety-six cases were reported, with a mortality of 15 per cent. In Toronto, 893 cases were reported with 115 deaths—a mortality of 13 per cent. Hamilton had 22 per cent. of deaths, Brantford, 16 per cent., and Ottawa, 12 per cent.

In Ontario the people are as a rule well fed and well housed, and the results ought to be much better than in the crowded, poverty-stricken centres of the older countries. In the pre-antitoxin days our percentage of mortality was much lower than in New York and the large cities of Europe, where the mortality averaged from 30 to 40 per cent. If their percentage mortality has been lowered from the above rate to 16 per cent. or less, surely ours in Ontario ought to show a corresponding decrease. But the report of the Ontario Board of Health shows that in 1902 it was 15 per cent.

I have questioned a large number of practitioners who use antitoxin faithfully and intelligently and they tell me that they now rarely lose a case of diphtheria, whereas in the pre-antitoxin days a very large percentage of their cases succumbed.

I am not going to enter into any argument to prove the efficiency of antitoxin. I take it that you will agree with me

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\* Read at Meeting of Ontario Medical Association.