

EARLY DIAGNOSIS OF MALIGNANT TUMORS.*

(Pathological Aspect.)

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It is a well-established custom for a practitioner when in need of assistance in a case to consult with a leading physician, surgeon, or a specialist. One type of the latter class which is forging to the front in all large centres is the pathologist in the role of a bedside adviser. Many cases have of late been reported in the standard journals in which is pointed out the tendency to more frequent personal contact between the pathologist and the practitioner, the former thus having the opportunity of seeing all aspects of the case, in contrast to his limited knowledge present in the older scheme.

To the pathologist is due the credit for teaching the surgeon just how radical an operation is necessary to free the individual from the diseased tissue, and for showing him how essential it is to remove the lymphatic vessels and glands which drain a malignant tumor. Malignant areas have been found by the pathologist in the glands, prior to their discovery in the primary growth, thus leading to the recognition of its malignancy, and this, even in the absence of hardness, thickening or other clinical signs of malignancy. Such perspicacity, if given its proper chance, bids fair in the near future to completely eradicate those hopelessly inoperable cases, which even now necessarily come to the operating table; and also those cases in which extremely radical measures are now and again unnecessarily adopted. In view of the above facts one should not consider that he has fulfilled his obligation to those patients in whom there is a tumor with a suspicion of malignancy until he has urged them to avail themselves of the advantages that are to be derived from the opinion of an expert pathologist. The purpose of the present paper is to point out some of the relations which exist between the clinical and pathological branches of medical work, and to urge an ever-increasing alliance of the same. The pathologist can be called in consultation for the purpose of aiding in diagnosis at three different stages: (1) At the preliminary examination. (2) At the operation. (3) After the removal of the tumor or part of it.

(1) At the preliminary examination. On account of his more thorough knowledge of the minute structure of tumors and of the changes which they undergo, especially the nature of early metastases, the pathologist may be able to recognize and to give a more accurate interpretation of their physical characters than the clinician, and thus enable an early diagnosis to be made.

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