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Progress of Medical Science.

THE THERAPEUTICS OF FUNCTIONAL HEADACHE.

BY ALLAN McLANE HAMILTON, M.D.

From the *Philadelphia Medical Times*, Feb. 6th, 1875.

All remedies for the alleviation of the several varieties of this condition may be included under the following head:

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| I. INTERNAL. | { | Corebral anæmiants. |
| | | “ stimulants. |
| | | Those diminishing reflex irritations.
“ “ remote local congestion. |
| II. LOCAL. | { | Cardiac sedatives. |
| | | Alteratives. { Malarial.
Syphilitic.
Gouty.
Rheumatic. |
| | | Peripheral irritants.
“ anæsthesiants.
“ revulsives. |
| III. GALVANISM. | | |

The headaches dependent upon anæmia of the brain result usually from nervous exhaustion. These are the headaches of brain-workers, or may also follow unusual physical fatigue. The distressing persistency of the headache of nervous prostration is the characteristic feature. It is the most protean of all forms, as it may be a close counterfeit of neuralgia, or, on the other hand, may be dull and sub-acute. These patients are usually anæmic and much reduced. The headaches are associated with vertigo, and oftentimes nausea. There is usually vomiting, and sometimes syncope. The mental powers are exhausted, and the patient who suffers in this way usually awakes unrefreshed by sleep, with dull, heavy pains and a sense of fatigue. There is little disposition to use the mind; the pulse is small and feeble, and there is sometimes a tendency to passive cerebral congestion. The skin is cool during the attack, and the surface may even be moist.

Many of my patients who suffer in this way are women, and the headache is the most distressing when the patients awaken. The use of a cup of tea or coffee is excellent at this time, and I have lately found that cocoa given in the form of a fluid extract is of very great benefit. Messrs. Hazard and Caswell have made for me a fluid extract which is quite concentrated. A drachm or two of this is the dose. The following prescription is a favorite of mine for these headaches:

R Strichniæ sulph., gr. i;
Acidi phosph. dil.,
Tr. ferri chlor., aa 3 vi;
Aquæ camphoræ, ad 3 iv;—M.

Sig.—A teaspoonful after eating.

The use of diffusible stimulants is in order. We may give the patient the aromatic spirits of ammonia and sherry wine several times a day with good results. Muriate of ammonia is an invaluable remedy in these headaches, particularly in hemicrania; it should be given in very large doses—from ten grains to thirty—every hour until relief is obtained.

A form of headache, spoken of as *hyperæsthetic* by Hanfield Jones, demands opposite treatment, for the administration of stimulants aggravates it greatly. These are the cases where there are redness of the face, tense carotids, injected conjunctivæ, and heat of skin, the patient is very restless, and the mental faculties are confused. These patients have cold hands and feet during the paroxysms, as a rule. There is imperfect nervous stimulation of the heart, and the cerebral vaso-motors are subject to paresis. These patients find it difficult to sleep; there is tossing at night, and the mind is possessed by a myriad of thoughts that chase each other through the brain. The first order of remedies in my table are of value here, and the bromides are the best of them. We may give this prescription and hope for good results, sometimes very immediate ones:

R Sodii bromidi, 3 i;
Fld. ext. ergotæ, 3 iss;
Aquæ camphoræ, ad 3 iv;—M.

Sig.—A teaspoonful every three hours, or two teaspoonfuls at night.

I believe the sodic salt to be the most efficacious of all, and the most reliable. Bromide of calcium is next in order, I am convinced, after having given it an extended trial.

In these headaches, cardiac sedatives are of incalculable benefit. Tincture of aconite and veratrum viride will often produce happy results. The continued use of digitalis, combined with zinc, the latter in the form of the oxide, does much to change the character of the circulation.

For the headaches of inebriety I have used since the year 1871 the monobromate of camphor. The results of my experiments I published in the *New York Medical Journal* of August of that year. I am sorry to see that this excellent remedy has fallen into disuse, for it seems to possess hypnotic properties peculiar to itself.

Bourneville, of Paris, has recently called attention to its physiological effects, and I trust its use will be more extended, it having received favor at the hands of this distinguished gentleman. Local depletion, and in some cases general depletion, are necessary. Leeches and cupping relieve the gorged sinuses at the base of the skull. A very common class of headaches are those dependent upon reflex causes. They may be called the *inhibitory* headaches. They go hand in hand with disturbance of digestion, irregularities in the uterine functions, and with other conditions dependent upon eccentric irritations transmitted to the central nervous axis. These headaches partake of all varieties; we may have the well-known sick headache, the headache of dysmenorrhœa, or that associated with an irritable uterus. Of course, our diagnosis will point out the cause very quickly; but oftentimes there are points of irritation