

# THE CANADA LANCET.

A MONTHLY JOURNAL OF

MEDICAL AND SURGICAL SCIENCE.

VOL. VIII. TORONTO, APRIL 1ST, 1876. No. 8

## Original Communications.

### TREATMENT OF CONSTIPATION.

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Constipation indicates rarity, or absence of the alvine evacuations. Within certain limits it is not of uncommon occurrence; indeed in individual cases it may be compatible with perfect health, for what is pathological in one is physiological in another. Cases are on record in which comparative good health has been maintained for many years with fecal evacuations only at intervals of six weeks, or two months, and Dr. Williams mentions the case of a lady of but four in the year at intervals of three months. But those who naturally have rare evacuations are more liable to be deranged than those who go more frequently. It is not a disease but only a symptom, therefore we shall endeavor to lay down some general rules that shall guide us in its treatment.

The treatment for each particular case will vary according to the special causes and the symptoms arising therefrom. Trousseau's remarks are so wise and excellent, I shall first give them:—That which is due to atony of the intestinal muscular tunic may be treated by *hygienic* and *local* means. Among the former the *will*, patiently and regularly applied, triumphs the most frequently over this infirmity, especially when it is in consequence of the habit which certain persons have of retaining the feces. Each day at the same hour the patient should go to the closet and make strong efforts a pretty long time and if these have been unfruitful wait till the next day—wait even though a desire should be felt beforehand. If the second day, after new attempts there be no evacuation, take immediately an injection, not with cold but with tepid water and later on with cold water. The next day new efforts should be made and repeated, the next day if unsuccessful, and this

second time a fresh cool injection taken if no evacuation has been obtained. This repetition invariably at the same hour ends by inducing a feeling of want at the moment that one wishes to go to the closet, and it is rare that after eight or ten days of these patient and methodic manœuvres a daily evacuation is not obtained. The morning is the best time to practise it, just after breakfast, whether that the accumulation of ingesta tends to expel in some way mechanically the contents of the large intestine, or whether, and this is the most reasonable, the work of digestion arouses in all the digestive canal, a preparatory muscular work. The *diet* plays a very important role. The means the surest to overcome constipation, are to make the vegetable exceed the animal, and especially herbaceous and raw fruits. Certain animal foods such as the milky have a slightly laxative action on many. Coffee, or tea is a powerful remedy for constipation. Among drinks, beer, probably is that which agrees best with the constipated; cider also, does very well. A drink of cold water in the morning on an empty stomach, in some excites an immediate call. Brown bread often relieves constipation, though its *modus operandi* is perhaps not very clear. Corn meal bread, or corn and milk are very good, also cracked wheat, or porridge. If these do not suffice, local means should be tried. After clysters, as above indicated, suppositories which for men especially are easier employed than injections. Those of butter of cacao generally answer; those of soap are more energetic and surer, and those of hardened honey by cooking, still more useful. The addition of from one to 5 grs. of extract of belladonna is very useful.

If constipation be due to want of intestinal secretion we should seek to excite it. The first means is the injection of highly mucilaginous substances e.g. linseed, white of egg, oil, and even when irritants are indicated it is well first to try the preceding. The application of cold by compresses to the abdomen has been stated by some as a *very valuable* remedy in removing constipation.

Among therapeutic agents, belladonna has rendered great service. Trousseau prescribed 1 gr. each, of the extract and powder to form a pill and for the patient to take one such in the morning, on an empty stomach, rather than at night. He then goes to two days, afterwards to five or six days and rarely exceeds four or five pills at a dose.