

Selected Article.

The Treatment of Cutaneous Malignant Epitheliomata (Cancer.)

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In previous articles I have endeavored to show why, in the majority of cases cancer of the skin should be treated by caustics instead of by excision. The students who have attended the Polyclinic during the last few years and followed the treatment of the many cases operated upon, will, I am certain, support the claim I make at my clinics that certain caustics, when properly applied, are usually much more reliable than the knife for the complete removal of the disease, at the same time the resulting scar or deformity is less. In this paper I will briefly discuss the principles which should guide the physician in the treatment of a case of cancer, in the selection of the caustic, the manner of its application, both as regards the strength of the application and the extent of area to which it should be applied and the duration of application in order that the disease be removed with the greatest certainty and with the least amount of destruction of normal tissue.

Cancers of the skin are usually described as occurring in three clinical forms, the superficial discoid, the papillary and the deep or infiltrating. The division has some advantages from a clinical standpoint, although it is not an absolutely correct one, as the majority of cancers commence in the rete and later may become superficial or deep-seated when first seen by the physician. In the superficial discoid form of epithelioma the growth is usually very slow as compared with the deep nodular forms, and the area of tissue invaded by the pathological epithelia, outside of the apparent extent of the tumor as seen by the naked eye, is less. The clinical forms rather depend upon the seat of growth, the rapidity of the epithelial proliferation, the direction of its extension, and the resisting power of the surrounding tissues, as well as the inflammatory or other changes occurring in the tissues of the affected part.

Under the term cancer of the skin are probably included several distinct forms of malignant epitheliomata, having in common an invasion of foreign territory by pathological epithelia, the production