

SECTION I

GENERAL RULES

A. PREPARATION FOR OPERATION

(a) The Preparation of the Patient

It is evidently not the practice everywhere to prepare patients before operation, but it is certainly not always advisable to operate on the patient the day after admission. We were once consulted by a lady who informed us that ovariectomy had been performed on her twice, and that on each occasion she had made a very rapid recovery. She was suffering from an abdominal swelling of recent development. When we pointed out that it would be necessary to make a careful examination of her, and that she would have to be properly prepared for the operation, she became so impatient that she consulted another surgical authority, who next day performed a laparotomy. Within twenty-four hours we were present at the autopsy. It was found that she had been suffering from cirrhosis of the liver with ascites, and that there were extensive intestinal adhesions as a result of the previous "ovariotomies." The bowel had been incised. Both ovaries were found to be intact! She had thus been three times subjected to exploratory operations. This is an example of what may result from undue haste in operating on an importunate patient.

1. Preparation to be carried out in the Ward. Our ward staff are provided with printed instructions regarding the preparation of patients for special operations; and general instructions insure that every patient is properly prepared for the administration of anaesthetics, the prevention of accidents, and the conduct of an aseptic operation.

(1) Every patient should be made to take a bath, and submit to a thorough wash with soap and warm water. The head should not be omitted from the cleansing process, and the skin in the region of the operation should also be shaved.

There is no reason why every patient should not have the benefit of a vigorous cleansing from head to foot in the surgical sense of the term. If he is accustomed to pay attention to the skin in the British manner, he will be interested to know that his habits are in accordance with the methods of aseptic surgery. On the other hand, those who have always regarded washing as superfluous will find themselves quite rejuvenated after the unusual experience of a bath.

When the whole body has been surgically cleansed, there should be no trace of dirt about the scalp, nails, mouth, throat, or genitals. This washing process, which is carried out in a warm bathroom on the day before the operation, is to be preferred to the practice of some surgeons who apply antiseptic poultices to the skin at the site of operation. The latter treatment is not devoid of danger, as poultices may give rise to irritation and eczema. It is sufficient to wash the infected part