

In the operative treatment of cancer, we must practically disregard mutilation and loss of function in order to save or prolong life, and obviously some organs can be more easily spared than others. It is in the light of all these facts that I venture to direct your attention to cancer of the prostate gland.

I have chosen this subject for several reasons, among which are the following:

*First*:—Because there is a general, widespread and erroneous opinion in our profession, that cancer of the prostate is a very rare disease. This belief is based upon the statistics of cancer, derived from pathological records, in which the prostate is shown to be one of the organs least frequently the subject of cancer, and no doubt this error has survived because the prostate has not always been systematically examined at autopsies.

*Second*:—Because of the habit, which unfortunately prevails very generally, of making a diagnosis of hypertrophy of the prostate or “enlarged prostate” in the case of every man past middle life who seeks advice for disturbances of the urinary function. I believe I am safe in saying that medical practitioners generally consider that there is no difficulty in diagnosing senile prostatic hypertrophy and rarely look beyond the obvious facts of disturbed urination, with palpable enlargement of the prostate felt through the rectum, in elderly men; and I am quite positive that this is a fatal mistake. It should become the systematic habit of every practitioner to attempt a diagnosis between ordinary senile hypertrophy and other special causes of disturbed bladder function such as cancer, tuberculosis, stone, chronic inflammation, etc.

*Third*:—The great importance of the subject; on account of its frequent occurrence, the hopelessness of all treatment except surgical treatment in its very early history, and the distress and misery which it causes when radical treatment has become impossible. During the last fifteen or twenty years, much attention has been given by surgeons to the operative treatment of senile hypertrophy of the prostate, and a pretty general unanimity of opinion has been reached on this subject, but not so with cancer of the prostate. Indeed, operations upon the prostate for hypertrophy have only incidentally shown the incorrectness of statistics based upon post-mortem records, and have proved that, instead of being a very rare disease, it is a very common one; but beyond this no very great advance has been made in its treatment.

*Frequency*:—Young believes that cancer of the prostate occurs as often as once in seven cases of prostatic enlargement, in men past fifty. (Journal of the Medical Association, Vol. 46, 1906.) Thompson Walker,