

The Deleterious Effects of the Bromide Treatment in the Diseases of the Nervous System.

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IN this paper I wish to discuss the dramatic and disastrous symptoms which result from the use of the bromide salts in the treatment of nervous diseases. By these I do not mean the rash, the cachexia, the feebleness, and the depression, but the confusion, the restlessness, the violence, and the syndrome of symptoms resembling mania and paresis.

Bromide is a remedy so constantly used and so constantly abused that it will not be out of place first to call to your attention just what are its effects upon the nervous system.

"Bromide", according to Hare "affects the brain, cord, and peripheral nervous system. It slows the development of thought, decreases the excitability and power of the motor cells of the brain, and is a distinct depressant to the mental and intellectual portions of the cerebral cortex. Upon the cord it exerts a marked sedative effect so that reflex action is decreased. Motion is maintained after sensation to pain and reflex action is lost. In this way damage is done without either patient or physician being alive to the fact. It also depresses the peripheral parts of the sensory nerves."

The results upon the peripheral nervous system are slight and infrequent as compared with those upon the cord and these in turn are neither so severe nor so frequent as are those upon the high

er centers. The areas of the cortex are very greatly depressed, as Bastedo has proven by his experiments. He found that in the case of a bromidized dog it was impossible to produce convulsions by the artificial stimulation of those cortical areas.

There are several conditions in the nervous system in which the bromide salts are used. It would take much more time than I have at my disposal this afternoon to consider each one. I propose, therefore, to say a few words about some of the most frequent. I shall speak of the use of bromide in the following eight conditions: (1) Epilepsy, (2) toxic cases, (3) mental conditions, (4) traumatic and arterial conditions, (5) cases requiring long continued use of the drug, (6) alcoholic cases, (7) cases with an idiosyncrasy, (8) cardiac cases.

1. Epilepsy. It has long been recognized that there are certain types of epilepsy in which the use of bromide aggravates both the irritability and restlessness preceding the seizure as well as the depression following. Observers have reported cases of idiopathic epilepsy of long standing in which the administration of even moderate doses of bromide controlled the convulsions but substituted for them confusion, furor, violence kleptomania, delusions, and homicidal tendencies. Weir Mitchell described such a case in 1887. The