

THE PLANNING OF ABDOMINAL INCISIONS 11

THE ADMINISTRATION OF ANÆSTHESIA IN ACUTE CONDITIONS OF THE ABDOMEN.

Dr. Z. Mennell, who has most ably administered anæsthetics for me for some years, advises as follows :—

" For the successful performance of an operation for acute abdominal disease, the method of anæsthesia and choice of one to be used must be carefully considered.

" In the first place the patients are generally suffering from more or less severe toxæmia due to absorption from the abdominal condition, and secondly, it is rarely possible to prepare them for operation on account of urgency.

" Generally speaking, ether should be selected and chloroform avoided, and in the less severe cases the ordinary nitrous oxide ether sequence may be used; the number of cases in which a perfectly satisfactory anæsthesia can be obtained by this means varies directly with the skil of the anæsthetist in the use of this method.

" When morphine has been given before the operation it is usually possible to obtain anæsthesia by means of open ether, that is ether dropped on to a Skimmers or Schimmelbusch mask; there are, however, many cases in which a preliminary narcotic (morphine, scopolamine) is inadmissible.

" In cases where there is already severe shock the responsibility of the anæsthetist is great; the condition may appear to be desperate, but usually the anæsthetic is taken better than would appear to be likely. Here the minimum of the anæsthetic must be used which is compatible with the necessary surgical manipulations, and the less anæsthetic used the less addition there is to the pre-existing shock. Oxygen must be used freely to counteract any cyanosis, and saline infusion subcutaneously, or if necessary intravenously, should be resorted to at the commencement of the operation. The use of strychnine and other cardiac stimulants is to be deprecated. The body warmth must be maintained; the room should be kept at a temperature of 70° F.; the body must not be unnecessarily exposed, and the legs and arms may be bandaged and covered with cotton wool; any saline or lotions used must be slightly above the body temperature.

" Children take ether well, but are specially liable to the