

DISCUSSION ON SUMMER DIARRHŒAS IN CHILDREN.¹

DIETETIC TREATMENT.

BY

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Dr. J. Lewis Smith, in his book on the Diseases of Children, says, "before the New York Foundling Asylum was established, every foundling admitted to the almshouse on Blackwell's Island died, more than 1,000 annually, before the age of two years, from summer diarrhœa." Every practising physician associates summer diarrhœa with improper feeding, impure air and bad hygienic surroundings, hence the disease is often spoken of as the summer epidemic of cities.

The indications for feeding, considering the etiology and pathology, may be discussed briefly as follows :

First. All food is to be withheld for from 18 to 24 hours.

Second. Only bland and non-irritating mucilaginous drinks are to be given for two or three days, something that will be readily absorbed and leave little or no residue for bacteria to develop in.

Third. Gradual return to a proper dietery.

When called upon to attend an infant suffering from summer diarrhœa, entero-colitis, fermental diarrhœa, or subacute milk infection, as the disease is variously called, I believe it is good practice to withhold all food for from 18 to 24 hours, allowing only small quantities of cold sterilized water at frequent intervals. By this means an opportunity is given to clear the intestine of all decomposing and irritating organic matter, thus starving out the intestinal germs which are causing the trouble or replacing them by less harmful ones. The improvement effected within a few hours by this course, where the child has not been long ill, is generally remarkable, and clearly shows that the food is not being properly digested, and can only be returned to gradually, and in small quantities, after carefully deciding what food will likely best suit the requirements of the particular case. It is my practice to abandon milk entirely for two or three days in artificially fed infants. When milk begins to disagree with an infant especially during the hot months of summer, I find it a difficult matter to correct the digestive disturbance if the milk, however carefully prepared and in whatever combination, is continued without interruption. Individual idiosyncrasies must be remembered and taken

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