

SOME POINTS IN THE TREATMENT OF POTTS' DISEASE.

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The points which one must consider in treating Potts' disease of the spine are: first, its tuberculous nature, demanding attention to the general health, requiring supporting agents and such remedies as are used in tuberculous affections of other parts of the body, such as Cod Liver Oil, Iron, etc.; and secondly, its local treatment directed to the bones and soft parts forming the spine itself. One should be familiar with the construction of the spine, and especially its physiology, to early diagnose this affection, when best results can be obtained. The causes and extent of deformity and complications should also be known in order to forestall their occurrence.

The spine is a column which must maintain the body erect, and yet must be flexible to accommodate the body to the different positions desired; it maintains its equilibrium in a healthy state through force of gravity. When a part of it becomes diseased, its function is interfered with, and the functions of other parts in relation to it are also altered. It is necessary, therefore, to consider the alterations which take place in the spine, in the progress of this disease; the ulceration or destruction beginning in the anterior portion of the body of the vertebra or the intervertebral substance, or both, and extending posteriorly, though but rarely affecting the arches or transverse processes, and resulting in a collapse of the column after excavation of the diseased part, and the falling forwards of the spine above the point of disease, because of the loss of substance and weakening of the part. This is increased by the weight of the trunk and head and shoulders, above the area of disease. Thus, to prevent deformity should be one of our main objects, and at the same time to relieve pain and discomfort, which is usually due to pressure upon the nerves at their emergence from the intervertebral foraminae, either through distortion of their canals or by inflammatory products deposited about them.

As in tuberculous disease of other parts, our first endeavor is to secure rest; to restrain motion by fixation, and to protect the parts from injury, by supporting the superincumbent weight of the body, thus removing the cause of injury, which is usually the increased