

Selected Articles.

THE COLD POULTICE AS AN ANTIPYRETIC IN HIGH GRADES OF FEVER.

I desire to call attention to this simple, but efficient, agent as an antipyretic in high grades of fever, either typhoid, malarial, or pneumonia. It is an agent that I have used for this purpose for the past fifteen years, with much satisfaction to myself and infinite comfort to my patients. It is an antipyretic that possesses many advantages over the many coal tar agents of this kind, inasmuch as it never depresses the action of the heart or the nervous system, but accomplishes its work speedily, easily, pleasantly, and with comfort to the patient, and always leaving him in a better condition than it found him.

The cold poultice: how it is prepared and applied—A sufficient quantity of flax seed meal to prepare a poultice of suitable dimensions is placed in a common earthen bowl, and over this is poured boiling water, while the meal is constantly stirred with a large spoon until cooked to the consistency of soft mush. This material is then spread on a piece of soft cotton cloth, for an adult, about eighteen inches long and twelve or fourteen wide, or sufficiently long to cover the entire abdomen, from the pubis upward, extending at least half way up the chest, well over the cardiac region, so as to fully cover the heart and half of the chest. This poultice is now covered with another piece of cotton of corresponding dimensions. After being spread and covered, the entire surface to be applied to the person is frequently besprinkled with ice water until its temperature goes down to 68° or 70°, when it is ready for application. At this point, I would suggest that the poultice be not spread too thick, as in that case it would prove oppressive to the patient.

The poultice as thus prepared is applied over the chest, from above the cardiac region to the pubis. In my experience with it, which dates back fifteen years, I have never known it produce shock to the nervous system or discomfort to the patient. On the contrary, patients with high fever, who have learned its advantages, will often request it when they feel sensations of rise of temperature. Its work, different from that of the cold bath, is accomplished slowly, gradually, gently, and effectually. I regard the cold poultice, applied in this way, as a good substitute for the cold bath, and as a measure, while efficient, without its many disadvantages, dangers, and difficulties of application.

In the *treatment of acute disease*, high temperature constitutes one of the greatest difficulties in the practice of our profession, and is a question of vital importance. Of late years, our principal

means for the reduction of high temperature have been the cold bath, cold sponging, the coal tar antipyretics, as antipyrine, antifebrine, phenacetine, salol, quinine. These are all valuable remedies, and occupy an important place in our medical armamentarium.

Of all these agents, the quinine is the most permanent in its effects. But the practitioner frequently meets with cases of fever of dangerously high temperature in which even large doses of quinine accomplish but little, and antifebrine or phenacetine in full doses will reduce temperature only one or two degrees, with an enormously exhausting perspiration and unpleasant cardiac depression; and then the reduction of temperature is only for a short time, and our work has to be gone over again and again, with the same unpleasant results. If this routine is to be continued from day to day, from week to week, there comes a time when the remaining strength and physical powers of our patient will become exhausted. In truth, under such circumstances, we will note, if we are careful, that the waning strength of the patient is leaving him day by day.

It is under just such circumstances that it becomes necessary to resort to other antipyretics that will not shock the general system as the cold bath or depress the vital powers as the coal tar antipyretics. And here, under these circumstances and in this perplexing condition of affairs, is where the simple and unostentatious cold poultice supplies a most important deficiency. It has not the dramatic effect of the cold bath, and not its apparent scientific glamour, with all of its paraphernalia and systematic arrangements. It is too simple to be regarded as scientific. But, far more valuable than all of these, it is effective and innocent. It is a simple and pure antipyretic, efficient and without danger.

It is not designed to cover the entire treatment of fever, but to aid other methods in the treatment of that condition, and to take the place of some and to aid others in their work. It co-operates well with the sulphate of quinine; it takes the place very well of the coal tar preparations, and it does not interfere with the internal administration of antiseptics.

In that class of cases of pneumonia of violent type, with an unyielding temperature of 104° or 105°, frequent, hard, wiry pulse, great frequency and oppression of respiration, I have seen a cold poultice applied over the entire chest, extending back well over the sides, accomplish more in the reduction of temperature, of frequency of cardiac action and respiration than all other local agents combined, and at the same time with infinite comfort to the patient. In the application of the poultice, my rule has been to remove it when the temperature falls to or about the normal, and to replace it when it