

A METHOD OF TREATING CYSTS OF THE BREAST*

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A NUMBER of years ago I was asked to assist a surgeon in an operation for the removal of the breast from the wife of a colleague. The case was supposed to be malignant, without any involvement of the axillary glands; the tumor was hard, nodulated, had been noticed for some weeks and appeared to be increasing in size; it was situated in the lower zone of the right breast. The breast was removed and on examination the tumor proved to be a simple cyst containing clear fluid; it was so full of fluid that there was no sensation of fluctuation. This case impressed me much and I then suggested to my colleagues that if the cyst had been tapped it would have collapsed and there would have been no necessity of removing the breast.

After this in any doubtful case I always put a needle into the growth; if it was cystic the fluid was evacuated and the tumor instantly disappeared, and if it was a solid growth it was easy to tell. In some cases of scirrhous the resistance and peculiar sensation conveyed enabled me to make a diagnosis. As long as the fluid evacuated from the cyst was clear I had no doubt of its non-malignancy, but if it was bloody fluid, then the case was operated upon. The following cases taken at random from my notebook will do for illustration:

CASE I.—Miss D., aged forty-eight, came to me in May, 1900, complaining of a swelling in the left breast; it was painless but she felt some discomfort from it. She had only noticed it for a couple of weeks. On examination I felt a smooth, round, hard tumor in the left lower quadrant; the glands in the axilla could not be felt. I did not think it malignant, but as a matter of procedure put in a needle and immediately evacuated nearly two ounces of clear fluid. I did not see her for some time, then she told me the fluid had partially re-collected, but gave her no discomfort. I saw her a few days ago (February, 1916), she was quite well and no tumor could be detected in the breast.

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