

make more careful classifications of these cases, and to learn more about their actual clinical characteristics and about their etiology. One thing is certainly true; estimation of the amount of uric acid present in the urine, whether a good method or a bad one is used, is utterly valueless from a diagnostic standpoint. There is a widespread notion that the condition called uric acid diathesis can be diagnosed by estimating the uric acid, but when carried out for this purpose such a procedure is a waste of the examiner's energy and of the patient's money.

As was noted in the beginning of this paper, and as is known to all of you, there was made, some years ago, a very active attempt to prove that gout is due to an excess of xanthin bases in the system; and, more recently, in this country particularly, there have been some attempts to show that the "uric acid diathesis" is due to the same substances. This question may be dealt with most briefly of all. The basis of this teaching was the supposedly exact observation, by Kolisch and a number of writers that followed him, that the xanthin bases are increased in cases of gout; and also that in renal disease their amount is increased. The latter increase was supposed to be due to imperfect oxidation to uric acid, as a result of the renal disease itself; for Kolisch taught that the oxidation of xanthin bases to uric acid is carried out by the kidney. As is so often the case, the original teaching has persisted in the minds of many, even after it has been proved to be incorrect. Kolisch's views have been demonstrated to be wrong in both particulars, namely, there is not an increase in the xanthin bases excreted in gout, and, so far as subsequent investigations have gone, there is no reason for thinking that disease of the kidney has any influence upon the oxidation of xanthin bases to uric acid.

The statements originally made were due, as have been so many statements concerning uric acid, to the use of bad methods, more especially the Kruger-Wulff method, which practically always gives results that are too high. The use of more exact processes—particularly that of Solkowski—has served to contradict and disprove the statements of Kolisch and his followers.

A great deal of stress has been laid upon the toxicity of some of the xanthin bases. That they are toxic, however, proves nothing concerning gout or the uric acid diathesis. Besides the xanthin bases there are numerous excretory substances that are toxic; but we do not accuse them of being the cause of gout or the uric acid diathesis, and we have, from a study of their excretion, no better reason for thinking that the xanthin bases are the actual cause of these conditions. The excretion of these