

The Use of Old Antitoxin.

As is well known, the various manufacturers of antidiphtheritic serum are accustomed to have it returned to them by the retail druggist or physician after it has been in their possession for several months in order that the stock may be replenished with freshly made material. This is done because it is a well known fact that the serum is apt to diminish in its antitoxic power with the passing of time, and in order that the full antitoxic value may always be received by the patient. With the approved methods which have been introduced for the manufacture and preservation of this product, it has been found that deterioration takes place less rapidly than in the serums which were first prepared. The most careful manufacturers see to it that the hermetically sealed tubes in which the serum is placed contain a greater number of antitoxic units than is put upon the label, allowing, in this way, for a slight deterioration to take place without in any way decreasing the value of the product; or, in other words, it is possible for the serum to lose somewhat in its antitoxic power, and yet be as strong as the label states it to be.

While therefore it is advisable for physicians to employ fresh serum whenever possible, it is extremely inadvisable for a physician to fail to give the antitoxin which may be in his possession simply because it does not bear a recent date. On the contrary, such serums are very frequently possessed of a great deal of power, and should always be used at least until a fresh supply can be obtained. This fact is not only recognized in this country by those who have had the most experience in the matter, but it is interesting to note that the French Minister of the Interior has given directions that physicians shall not wait for the receipt of a fresh supply, but shall immediately begin the administration of that which they have on hand rather than lose precious time; for as we all know, the value of antitoxic serum is in direct ratio to the promptness of its employment after the disease is recognized. Even if the serum has been kept for as long a period as a year, and a slight sediment is formed, this does not in any way indicate that there has been any material alteration in its value. When it is considered that the administration of full doses of antitoxin on the first day the false membrane appears, decreases the mortality to as low a point as two per cent., and on the second day to six per cent., the importance of administering whatever may be at hand is emphasized. This is the more important when we recall that the death-rate is thirty per cent. when the injection is made as late as the third day, and fifty per cent. when it is made as late as the fourth day.—*Therapeutic Gazette.*