

Practical Hints on Pharmacy.*

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This paper is made up of ideas, some original and some not. The object is to give a few practical hints which the writer has found by experience to be thoroughly practical and up to date. In these days of progression and sharp competition, it is necessary for one to be fully awake and take advantage of every little thing. People like to see a druggist who is progressive, and it is the best kind of an advertisement for people to say, "Well, I like to deal at Mr. Z.'s store; he always has something new to show or tell, and he is thoroughly up to date." This paper deals, however, with subjects behind the prescription counter rather than with those in the front.

Every druggist has, of course, his practical ideas worked out in some form, but perhaps there are some hints in this paper that will be of service to him. What may be of use in one store is not necessarily true of others, but it is hoped that all will be of some value to every one.

Always send a repeated prescription out in a new dress. A repeated prescription with soiled label shows carelessness and lack of attention to details. Prescriptions, above other things, should be faultlessly put up.

All prescriptions, when finished, should be checked off by another prescription clerk. The ingredients, quantities, weights, measures, and labels, should all be called off by the compounder, each little point being noted. This is the only way of insuring absolute accuracy. This has been the means on innumerable occasions of saving the druggist's reputation. A case that recently happened will bear repeating. It was a murder trial in New York, and the prescription called for quinine sulphate and morphine sulphate, the latter in doses of $1\frac{1}{2}$ grain each, in capsule form. The patient died, and, as there were peculiar circumstances attending the death, a chemical examination of the contents of the stomach of the dead body was made. Morphine was found in such quantities as to leave not the slightest doubt but that she had died from morphine poisoning. The druggist was brought to trial, charged with criminal negligence in compounding prescriptions. On the witness stand it was proven that all prescriptions in that store were checked off by another prescription clerk, who had examined the bottles, weights, etc., and found them correct. It is needless to state that the druggist was fully exonerated, and in the end the affair was of decided benefit to him. All the proceedings were known to every one, and when the true facts of the matter became public property customers showed their confidence in his ability and carefulness in a substantial manner. It was subsequently proven that the morphine that caused the death of the patient was administered by

the prescriber, who later paid the penalty for the crime.

Mucilage of Acacia when allowed to stand for some time changes in composition, due to a fermentation that sets up. The preparation may be kept indefinitely by using chloroform water. I do not think any physician could object to chloroform being there, as it is present to the extent of only one-half of one per cent.

In making infusion of digitalis, it has been shown that cold water is preferable to hot water, in that less coloring matter and more colorless active principles are dissolved. In the following formula it has been found that the product keeps a month longer, while with the official product a decomposition sets in in three or four days. Dr. H. C. Wood, Professor in the University of Pennsylvania, states that there is no therapeutic objection to the use of ammonia water in the quantity and manner used. The formula is as follows:

Digitalis leaves, bruised.....	120 grains.
Water.....	14½ fluid ozs.
Ammonia water.....	90 minims.
Alcohol.....	1 fluid oz.

Macerate for one hour, agitating occasionally, express, wash residue with water filter. To the 14½ fluid ounces add 90 minims ammonia water, 1 fluid ounce alcohol, and sufficient water to make the product measure a pint.

In making the Tincture of Catechu or the Compound Tincture of the Pharmacopoeia, gelatinization always results after a time. This is overcome by the use of logwood to the extent of ten per cent. There can be no therapeutic objection to its use.

This time in the year there are frequent calls for a good gargle. One largely used in the East and a most excellent preparation is composed of the Compound Infusion of Rose Leaves, with Tannin and Chlorate of Potash.

Ammonia Carbonate, as it is generally kept in the drug store, quickly loses its carbonic acid gas and ammonia, resulting in a white opaque mass or powder. In making the aromatic spirits of ammonia it is necessary to use the white translucent masses; hence the importance of keeping Ammonia Carbonate in its proper condition. An excellent plan to adopt is to keep it in a stone jar provided with perforated false bottom. A small quantity of concentrated ammonia being kept in the bottom all the time will insure a first-class chemical, the liberation of the ammonia gas from the water supplying that lost by the carbonate.

Prescriptions calling for soft elastic capsules containing liquids are received frequently, and every druggist, when it is practical, should put up his own capsules. There is a firm now who get up an apparatus for filling capsules, they supplying the capsules with the apparatus. The capsules are so shaped that an end can be cut off, the liquid dropped in from the apparatus, and the open top can be easily covered. It is an ingenious idea, and so simple that expertness comes with the

first few trials. A prescription calling for two dozen capsules could easily be made in twenty minutes, affording a profit proportionately much greater than when capsules already put up are dispensed.

Adeps Lanæ Hydrosus is the official Lanoline and contains 30 per cent. of water. It is far cheaper to buy the anhydrous Lanoline and mix the water with it yourself.

Chloroform is now made so pure and so cheaply that the Pharmacopoeia, recognizing this fact, has discarded the former official chloroformum venale. Notwithstanding this fact, there are still two kinds in commerce so-called, pure and impure. The modern process for its manufacture yields the remarkable amount of 167 per cent. of pure chloroform from 100 per cent. of original material, or, in other words, one hundred parts of acetone will yield one hundred and sixty-seven parts of pure chloroform; thus making it entirely unnecessary to purchase so-called commercial chloroform at the price of the pure and pay a higher price for that labelled pure, when they all come from the same original container.

Regarding excipients, there should always be a little jar of glucose syrup, and one each of glycerite of starch and tragacanth; also a variety of one ounce bottles with pipette in cork, containing, variously, water, mucilage of acacia, glycerine, and syrup. For dusting powders, there should be a number, all in two ounce wide mouth bottles with sprinkler top, containing, respectively, powdered licorice root, starch, lycopodium, powdered acacia, and powdered carbonate of magnesia. These could be arranged conveniently on one shelf on the prescription counter, and will be the means of saving much time, trouble, and many steps.

Every prescription counter should be supplied with a powder board for folding powders on, one, say, seventeen by twenty inches would be sufficiently large. Have the surface smooth and well varnished. The average prescription counter is always a little soiled, and rarely presents a perfectly smooth surface. This little device, if kept within easy reach, will be found a necessity.

An ingenious device recently put on the market by a Boston house is an ointment slab or block composed of several layers of parchment paper. The idea is that after the ointment is mixed on the top sheet this can simply be torn off and thrown away, saving much time, as it does away with the usual porcelain slab and its frequent cleaning. Some ointments may be too stiff to work with advantage, but they can be easily softened. In the way of a spatula for use with ointments that act on metal there is quite an ingenious one gotten out by another Boston firm. It consists of a steel blade thoroughly coated with gutta percha, forming altogether a very useful utensil, combining all the advantages of the ordinary spatula with none of its disadvantages.