

Length of Vaccination Scratch

Q.—What is the Ministry of Health regulation length of scratch for vaccination ?

A.—The Ministry of Health has not yet thought fit to lay down any regulation governing the length of the vaccination scratch. Although no "regulation length" has been prescribed by the Ministry the Vaccination Order, 1930 (S.R. and O., 1930, No. 2), stated in paragraph 7 of the third schedule (Instructions to Vaccinators under Contract) that vaccination should be done by a "linear" incision or scratch "not more than a quarter of an inch long."

Saturated Solutions for Dispensing

Q.—It is said that in dispensing many doctors use a system of saturated solutions, and that 1 fluid drachm (3.5 ml.) of a saturated solution of the following chemicals contains the indicated quantity of the chemical: potassium bromide 30 gr. (2 g.), sodium salicylate 60 gr. (4 g.), sodium bicarbonate 60 gr., potassium citrate 60 gr., ammonium carbonate 12 gr. (0.8 g.). Are these figures correct, and what is the corresponding figure for sodium chloride? Is it also correct that the potassium citrate solution must have some chloroform in it "to prevent oxidation"? Does the darkening in colour which sometimes appears in the sodium salicylate solution on keeping indicate deterioration?

A.—The strength of a saturated solution of any pharmacopoeial substance is given in the *British Pharmacopoeia*. The quantities in the question are correct except for sodium bicarbonate, which should be 5.4 gr. (0.35 g.), and for ammonium carbonate, which should be 15 gr. (1 g.). The figure for sodium chloride is 120 gr. (8 g.). The *B.P.* says that potassium citrate should be kept in a well-closed container. There is no authority for adding chloroform to potassium citrate solution; this would not prevent oxidation. The darkening in colour which appears in a sodium salicylate solution does indicate some oxidation but it may not indicate very much.

Thrombosis after Pyelography

Q.—Following a recent intravenous injection for pyelography of a floating kidney, a middle-aged man of active habits has developed a sclerosis of his right basilic and cephalic veins. (1) To what may the sclerosis be attributed, and may there be other patches of it in the system? (2) Is the condition likely to progress, and is there a possibility of any disablement of the arm or of a clot separating anywhere in the system? (3) What treatment, if any, is indicated?

A.—It is quite usual for a thrombus to form after pyelography; when, as in this case, it is extensive it shows that the patient is more sensitive to irritating intravenous injection than usual. (1) It is unlikely, without signs or symptoms, that there are more thrombosed veins in this part of the body. (2) There is as a rule no resulting disablement, because there are quite adequate collaterals to prevent oedema and other complications. Separation of the clot does not occur in these cases. (3) There is no treatment indicated except to spare the arm from effort until the condition resolves. Appearance of thromboses elsewhere would be an indication for the administration of dicoumarol.

Pumpkin Seeds as an Anthelmintic

Q.—One often hears of the alleged efficacy of pumpkin pips in the treatment of taeniasis in South Africa. Recently a patient stated that he had been given, without success, two courses of treatment for tapeworm by the orthodox male fern, and then on the advice of a farmer's wife treated himself by ingesting several handfuls of these pips. What is the therapeutic agent present in pumpkin pips?

A.—Pumpkin seed or cucurbita (*B.P.C.*), or pepo (*U.S.P.*), has for centuries been used as an anthelmintic in the West Indies, Southern Europe, Africa, and the East. It contains about 30% of a fixed oil, an acrid resin, volatile oils, protein substances, and sugar. The resin is probably the active principle. The dose is 1 to 2 oz. (30 to 60 g.) of the dried seed, preceded by a saline purge and followed a few hours later by castor oil. It appears to be safe but unreliable. It is used for roundworm and tapeworm, especially *Taenia saginata*.

NOTES AND COMMENTS

Frustration of Left-handedness and Absent Knee-jerks.—Dr. E. GALLOP (London, S.W.) writes: As always your valuable section headed "Any Questions?" contains much of interest, and this week (July 5, p. 40) there is a reference to the effect of the inhibition of left-handedness in the production of stammering which recalls the case of a young woman I had to examine as to her medical fitness to take up an appointment overseas about a year ago. She appeared to be perfectly healthy, and the only abnormality I could find was that her knee-jerks were absent—really absent. No positioning or reinforcement produced a flicker. She told me that when in the A.T.S. a veritable battery of doctors had been unable to discover why the jerk was missing. I happened to find that she was really a left-handed person and from childhood dexterity had been forced upon her. I could not help feeling that as the result of this most unnatural and gross interference with her inborn characters she had lost her knee-jerk. But it is the only case I have seen and maybe I am barking up the wrong tree.

Bringing Up Baby.—Dr. E. J. DENNISON (East Grinstead, Sussex) writes: The question about "Bringing Up Baby" (June 28, p. 958) did not, I think, receive quite the answer it deserved. Presuming that it was asked in all seriousness, then I suggest that the answer might be as follows: *Instance 1.*—If the baby has been fed and has received attention—i.e., wind up, dry nappy, etc.—then it should be put down comfortably and left. A baby requires peace and quiet in order to digest its food. It does not require "company" at this time, for that could only hinder and delay its digestion. *Instance 2.*—If he is picked up 1½ hours before his next meal, then obviously he will have to be "amused" for 1½ hours. Whoever picks him up cannot reasonably put him down after half an hour and expect him to amuse himself for a further hour. If the parents wish to lavish parental love upon him, as indeed they should do, then I would suggest that, at three months old, half an hour immediately before a feed is the best time to do it, and possibly for a short time after while he is bringing up his wind. Regarding not "thwarting" a baby, surely it is time somebody stamped heavily on this kind of nonsense, which is all too common these days. If life is to be bearable for anybody in the house—and, incidentally, for the neighbours, if any—then the baby must be taught, and taught early, to conform to the rules of the household—i.e., meals at certain times, sleep at certain times, and so on—which everybody else follows as a matter of course; just as, when it grows older, it should be taught the rules of ordinary life in the outside world rather than be left to find them out the hard way for itself. Only by doing these things can the parents hope to retain the respect and friendship of their child as he grows up. An unthwarted baby will grow into an unthwarted child, and thence into an unthwarted adolescent and adult. It would be very easy—and very often, I suspect, not incorrect—to trace a number of our present-day troubles—juvenile crime particularly, but also some adult crimes, divorces, strikes, and so on—to an unthwarted babyhood in the person or persons responsible. Certainly the falling birthrate, which happily at the moment shows a temporary check, is partially due to this mistaken idea that a baby should not be thwarted. How often does one hear, "No more for us. The first one was quite enough bother to bring up." To the parents who asked this question I would say: "Assert yourselves now as the child's guide and teacher; show him how to live in modern society, for he obviously cannot know for himself; then you may reasonably expect happiness for him and for yourselves. If you allow him to rule you, as apparently is suggested, then you are not going halfway to meet trouble: you've got it already."

Correction

In the answer to a question about bleached bread (July 26, p. 159) reference was made to "canine distemper." This should have read "canine hysteria."

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