

A hitherto unobserved effect of the salicylates / by G. A. Gibson and R. W. Felkin.

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Publication/Creation

[London?] : [publisher not identified], [1889?]

Persistent URL

<https://wellcomecollection.org/works/k4ejpfuj>

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A HITHERTO UNOBSERVED EFFECT OF THE SALICYLATES.

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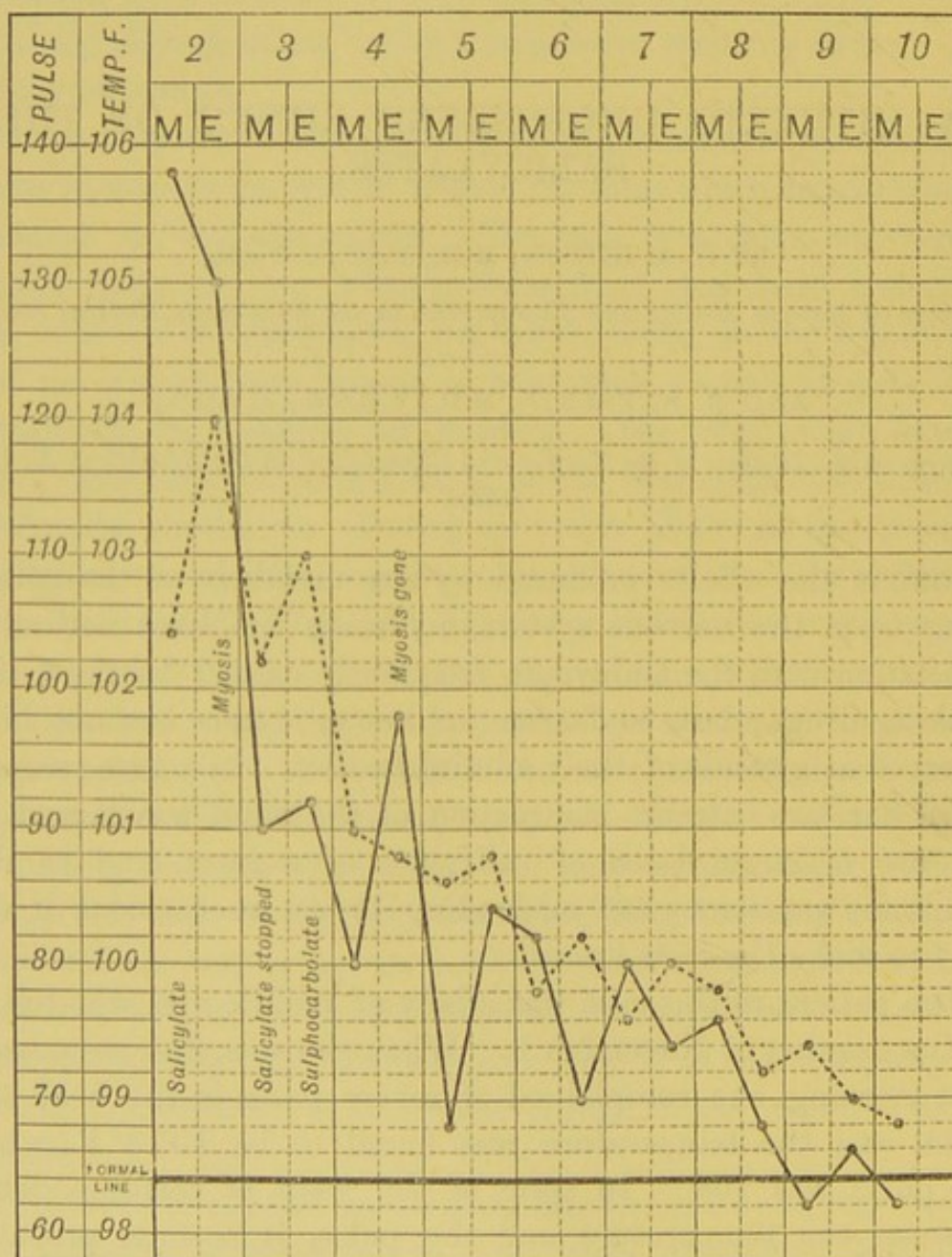
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AMONGST the effects produced by the members of the salicy group upon the nervous system, mydriasis has been noticed in association with the amblyopia frequently caused by the action of these drugs; but, so far as we know, myosis has not been observed as a result of their administration. In a case recently under our care extreme contraction of the pupil was caused by the use of large doses of salicylate of sodium, and as this symptom was somewhat misleading to us, we consider it our duty to make the facts known.

The patient in this case was a lady of middle age, who fell ill on the evening of November 9. When she was first seen, early next morning, she complained of severe pains in the head and limbs, and the temperature was found to be 105.8°F. , while the pulse was 104. In spite of the want of correspondence between the temperature and the pulse, it seemed probable that the condition was rheumatic in its nature, and the patient was ordered twenty grains of sodium salicylate every two hours. In the afternoon of the same day the pupils were found to be greatly contracted, and their reaction to light was absolutely lost, while the vision was distinctly impaired. Tinnitus aurium and deafness were also present, and were accompanied by severe

headache, chiefly experienced over the occipital and parietal regions.

The subsequent history of the case is of no importance in this connexion: all that it is necessary to mention is that on the following day phlegmonous erysipelas made its appear-



ance on the left leg, in consequence of which, along with the fact that the temperature had fallen to 101°F. , the further administration of the sodium salicylate was suspended, and sulpho-carbolate of sodium was substituted for it at a later period of the day. On the following morning the pupils,

although still somewhat small, reacted to light, and it was found at the evening visit that they had returned to their usual size. About mid-day on November 13 the temperature again began to rise; a dose of salicylate of sodium was given, and repeated two hours later. At the evening visit, about nine o'clock, the pupils were found to be once more contracted, and to have lost their normal reaction. The effect had disappeared before next morning. The patient made an excellent recovery.

The myosis and loss of reaction to light appeared within eight hours of the commencement of the employment of the salicylate of sodium, and did not entirely pass away until thirty hours had elapsed from the time of its last administration. These facts may be seen at a glance on referring to the accompanying chart, on which the temperature is shown by a continuous, and the pulse by a dotted, line.

Our purpose in describing this pupillary phenomenon is to call attention to a result of the action of the salicylates upon the nervous system which might lead, in cases in which it appears, to an error in diagnosis. In the present instance we were somewhat inclined to conclude that we had to deal with a cerebral affection, and such an idiosyncrasy as the case displayed may probably be seen again. The salicylates are in frequent use by patients acting on their own responsibility, and it is well to know that a contracted pupil, showing no reaction to ordinary stimuli, may be caused by them.

