

Cholera morbus : directions for the prevention and cure of the cholera morbus as suggested by the Board of Health, president Sir Henry Halford, bart. and published by order of His Majesty's Privy Council.

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Tracts 13/11/11
CHOLERA MORBUS.

“ Those who have been addicted to drinking spirituous liquors, and indulgence in irregular habits, have been the greatest sufferers from this disease.”

*Wm Owen
Oct - 1891*
DIRECTIONS

FOR THE

Prevention and Cure

OF THE

CHOLERA MORBUS

AS SUGGESTED BY THE

BOARD OF HEALTH,

PRESIDENT

Sir Henry Hallford, Bart.

AND PUBLISHED BY ORDER OF

HIS MAJESTY'S PRIVY COUNCIL.

LONDON:

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1831.

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THESE DIRECTIONS FOR THE PREVENTION AND CURE OF THE CHOLERA MORBUS.

From the London Gazette, Oct. 21.

COUNCIL CHAMBER, WHITEHALL, Oct. 20, 1831.

Their Lordships this day took into consideration certain rules and regulations proposed by the Board of Health, for the purpose of preventing the introduction and spreading of the disease called Cholera Morbus in the United Kingdom, together with an account of the symptoms and treatment of the said disease; and were pleased to order that the same be printed and published in the "Gazette," and circulated in all the principal ports, creeks, and other stations of the said United Kingdom, with a view that all persons may be made acquainted therewith, and conform themselves thereto.

The measures of external precaution for preventing the introduction of the cholera morbus by a rigorous quarantine have hitherto been found effectual; but as the disease approaches the neighbouring shores, not only is the necessity of increased vigilance more apparent, but it is also consistent with common prudence that the country should be prepared to meet the possible contingency of so dreadful a calamity. The intention of the following observations, therefore, is to submit to the public such suggestions as it appears to the Board of Health should either be immediately acted upon, or so far carried into operation as that in any case the country should not be found unprepared as to the best means of providing for its internal protection.

To effect the prevention of the introduction of the disorder the most active co-operation not only of the local authorities along the coast in the measures of the Government, but likewise the exercise of the utmost caution by all the inhabitants of such parts of the country, becomes indispensably necessary. The quarantine regulations established by the Government are sufficient, it is confidently hoped, to prevent the disorder from being communicated through any intercourse with the continent in the regular channel of trade or passage; but they cannot guard against its introduction by means of the secret and surreptitious intercourse which is known to exist between the coast of England and the opposite shores.

By such means this fatal disorder, in spite of all quarantine regulations, and of the utmost vigilance on the part of the Government, might be introduced into the United Kingdom; and it is clear that this danger can only be obviated by the most strenuous

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ous efforts on the part of all persons of any influence, to put a stop to such practices; the utmost exertions should be used to effect this end. The Magistrates, the Clergy, and all persons resident on the coast, it is hoped, will endeavour to impress upon the population of their different districts (and particularly of the retired villages along the sea shore), the danger to which they expose themselves by engaging in illicit intercourse with persons coming from the continent; and should appeal to their fears in warning them of the imminent risk which they incur by holding any communication with smugglers and others who may evade the quarantine regulations.

To meet the other objects adverted to in the introduction, namely, to prepare for the possible contingency of the country being visited by this disorder, as well as to assist in its prevention, it is recommended that in every town and village, commencing with those on the coast, there should be established a local Board of Health, to consist of the Chief and other Magistrates, the Clergyman of the parish, two or more physicians or medical practitioners, and three or more of the principal inhabitants; and one of the medical members should be appointed to correspond with the Board of Health in London.

Every large town should be divided into districts, having a district committee of two or three members, one of whom should be of the medical profession, to watch over its health, and to give the earliest information to the Board of Health in the town, whose instructions they will carry into effect.

3. As the most effectual means of preventing the spreading of any pestilence has always been found to be the immediate separation of the sick from the healthy, it is of the utmost importance that the very first cases of cholera which may appear should be made known as early as possible; concealment of the sick would not only endanger the safety of the public, but (as success in the treatment of the cholera has been found mainly to depend on medical assistance having been given in the earliest stage of the disease), would likewise deprive the patient of his best chance of recovery.

4. To carry into effect the separation of the sick from the healthy, it would be very expedient that one or more houses should be kept in view in each town or its neighbourhood, as places to which every case of the disease, as soon as detected, might be removed, provided the family of the affected person consent to such removal, and in case of refusal, a conspicuous mark, "SICK," should be placed in front of the house, to warn persons that it is in quarantine: and even when persons with the disease shall have been removed, and the house shall have been purified, the word "CAUTION" should be substituted, as denoting suspicion of the disease, and the inhabitants of such

house should not be at liberty to move out or communicate with other persons, until, by the authority of the local Board, the mark shall have been removed.

In some towns it may be found possible to appropriate a public hospital to this purpose, or should any barrack exist in the neighbourhood, it might, under the authority of the Commander of the Forces, be similarly applied.

5. Wherever it may be allowed to remove the sick from their own habitations to the previously selected and detached buildings, the houses from which they have been so removed, as well as the houses in which the sick have chosen to remain, should be thoroughly purified in the following manner :

Decayed articles, such as rags, cordage, papers, old clothes, hangings, should be burnt; filth of every description removed, clothing and furniture should be submitted to copious effusions of water, and boiled in a strong ley; drains and privies thoroughly cleansed by streams of water and chloride of lime; ablution of woodwork should be performed by a strong ley of soap and water; the walls of the house, from the cellar to the garret, should be hot lime-washed; all loose and decayed pieces of plastering should be removed.

Free and continued admission of fresh air to all parts of the house and furniture should be enjoined for at least a week.

It is impossible to impress too strongly the necessity of extreme cleanliness and free ventilation; they are points of the very greatest importance, whether in the houses of the sick, or generally as a measure of precaution.

6. It is recommended that those who may fall victims to this formidable disease, should be buried in a detached ground, in the vicinity of the house that may have been selected for the reception of cholera patients. By this regulation it is intended to confine as much as possible every source of infection to one spot; on the same principle, all persons who may be employed in the removal of the sick from their own houses, as well as those who may attend upon cholera patients in the capacity of nurses, should live apart from the rest of the community.

It should here be observed that the fewer the number of persons employed in these duties the better, as then the chance of spreading the infection by their means will be diminished.

7. Wherever objections arise as to the removal of the sick from the healthy, or other causes exist to render such a step not advisable, the same prospect of success in extinguishing the seeds of the pestilence cannot be expected.

Much, however, may be done, even in these difficult circumstances, by following the same principles of prudence, and by avoiding all unnecessary communication with the public out of doors; all articles of food, or other necessities required by the

family, should be placed in front of the house, and received by one of the inhabitants of the house, after the person delivering them shall have retired.

8. Until the time during which the contagion of cholera lies dormant in the human frame has been more accurately ascertained, it will be necessary, for the sake of perfect security that convalescents from the disease, and those who have had any communication with them, should be kept under observation for a period of not less than twenty days.

The occupiers of each house where the disease may occur, or be supposed to have occurred, are enjoined to report the fact immediately to the local Board of Health in the town where they reside, in order that the professional member of such Board may immediately visit, report, and if permitted to do so, cause the patient to be removed to the place allotted for the sick.

In every town, the name and residence of each of the members of the District Committee should be fixed on the doors of the church, or other conspicuous place.

9. All intercourse with any infected town, and the neighbouring country, must be prevented by the best means within the power of the Magistrates, who will have to make regulations for the supply of provisions; but such regulations are intended only for extreme cases; and the difficulty of carrying such a plan into effect on any extended scale will undoubtedly be great, but, as a precaution of great importance, it is most essential that it should be an object of consideration, in order to guard against the spreading of infection.

10. Other measures, of a more coercive nature may be rendered expedient for the common safety, if unfortunately so fatal a disease should ever show itself in this country in the terrific way in which it has appeared in various parts of Europe, and it may become necessary to draw troops or a strong body of police, around infected places, so as utterly to exclude the inhabitants from all intercourse with the country; and we feel sure what is demanded for the common safety of the state will always be acquiesced in with a willing submission to the necessity which imposes it.

The Board particularly invites attention to a fact confirmed by all the communications received from abroad, viz. that the poor, ill-fed, and unhealthy part of the population, and especially those who have been addicted to drinking spirituous liquors, and indulgence in irregular habits, have been the greatest sufferers from this disease, and that the infection has been most virulent, and has spread more rapidly and extensively in the districts of towns where the streets are narrow,

and the population crowded, and where little or no attention has been paid to cleanliness and ventilation. They are aware of the difficulty of removing the evils referred to, but they trust that attention thus awakened will insure the most active endeavours of all Magistrates, resident Clergymen, and persons of influence or authority to promote their mitigation, and as the amount of danger, and the necessity of precaution may become more apparent, they will look with increased confidence to the individual exertions of those who may be enabled to employ them beneficially in furtherance of the suggestions above stated.

BOARD OF HEALTH, COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS, October 20th, 1831.—The following are the early symptoms of the disease in its most marked form, as it occurred to the observation of Dr. Russell and Dr. Barry, at St. Petersburg, corroborated by the accounts from other places where the disease has prevailed :

Giddiness, sick stomach, nervous agitation, intermittent, slow, or small pulse, cramps beginning at the tops of the fingers and toes, and rapidly approaching the trunk, give the first warning.

Vomiting or purging, or both these evacuations of a liquid like rice water or whey ; or barley-water, come on ; the features become sharp and contracted, the eye sinks, the look is expressive of terror and wildness ; the lips, face, neck, hands, and feet, and soon after the thighs, arms, and whole surface, assume a leaden, blue, purple, black, or deep brown tint, according to the complexion of the individual, varying in shade with the intensity of the attack. The fingers and toes are reduced in size, the skin and softer parts covering them are wrinkled, shrivelled, and folded ; the nails put on a bluish pearly white ; the larger superficial veins are marked by flat lines of a deeper black ; the pulse becomes either small as a thread, and scarcely vibrating, or else totally extinct.

The skin is deadly cold and often damp, the tongue always moist, often white and loaded, but flabby and chilled like a piece of dead flesh. The voice is nearly gone ; the respiration quick, irregular, and imperfectly performed. The patient speaks in a whisper. He struggles for breath, and often lays his hand on his heart to point out the seat of his distress. Sometimes there are rigid spasms of the legs, thighs, and loins. The secretion of urine is totally suspended ; vomiting and purgings, which are far from being the most important or dangerous symptoms, and which in a very great number of cases of the disease have not been profuse, or have been arrested by medicine early in the attack, succeed.

It is evident that the most urgent and peculiar symptom of

this disease is the sudden depression of the vital powers, proved by the diminished action of the heart, the coldness of the surface and extremities, and the stagnant state of the whole circulation. It is important to advert to this fact, as pointing out the instant measures which may safely and beneficially be employed where medical aid cannot immediately be procured. All means tending to restore the circulation and maintain the warmth of the body, should be had recourse to without delay. The patients should always be put to bed, wrapt up in hot blankets, and warmth should be sustained by other external applications, such as repeated frictions with flannels and camphorated spirits; poultices of mustard and linseed (equal parts) to the stomach, particularly where pain and vomiting exists; similar poultices to the feet and legs, to restore their warmth. The returning heat of the body may be promoted by bags containing hot salt or bran applied to different parts of it. For the same purpose of restoring and sustaining the circulation, white wine whey, with spice, hot brandy and water, or sal volatile, in the dose of a tea spoonful in hot water, frequently repeated, or from five to twenty drops of some of the essential oils, as peppermint, cloves, or cajeput, in a wine glass of water, may be administered; with the same view, where the stomach will bear it, warm broth with spice may be employed. In very severe cases, or where medical aid is difficult to be obtained, from twenty to forty drops of laudanum may be given, in any of the warm drinks previously recommended.

These simple means are proposed as resources in the incipient stages of the disease, where medical aid has not yet been obtained.

In reference to the further means to be adopted in the treatment of this disease, it is necessary to state that no specific remedy has yet been ascertained; nor has any plan of cure been sufficiently commended by success to warrant its express recommendation from authority. The Board have already published a detailed statement of the methods of treatment adopted in India, and of the different opinions entertained as to the use of bleeding, emetics, calomel, opium, &c. There is reason to believe that more information on this subject may be obtained from those parts of the Continent where the disease is now prevailing; but even should it be otherwise, the greatest confidence may be reposed in the intelligence and zeal which the medical practitioners of this country will employ in establishing an appropriate method of cure.

HENRY HALFORD, *President of the Board.*