

[Dr. Wyer's Treatment for Lockjaw] Dr. William James Almon

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Publication Format

Manuscript

Type

Medicine

Symptoms

lock jaw

tetanus

wounds

pale and flabby wounds

inquietude

restlessness

spasmodic afflictions

Ingredients

cantharides

Spanish fly

opium

bark

wine

Places

Halifax

Nova Scotia

Cambridge

Massachusetts

United States

America

Source: Manuscript Notebook of Dr. William James Almon

Institution: Nova Scotia Archives | **Source Origin:** Almon Family Fonds | **Reference:** MG 1 / Microfilm Reel 10,045

Description

Instructions from a letter by Dr. Wyer of Cambridge MA for successfully treating lock jaw (tetanus) with cantharides followed by a bark tonic, wine, and cold baths, p. 73.

Transcription

MARGIN:

Extract

Letter from

My friend

[Dr. Wyer](#)

dated Cambridge

23 November. 1785

A Physician in the United States cures the lock jaw in the following manner. Upon inspecting the wounds of each patient | when wounds was the cause | he ever observ-
-ed that as the lock jaw came on, the wound became pale flabby and ceased to discharge proper matter, from this he /wisely/ concluded debility in the wounded part was the cause. he laid aside his opiates and antispasmodics, on which you know every one has heretofore depended & wisely applied [Cantharides](#) to the wound, as the Inflammation returned the lock jaw went off and by this treatment he has succeeded in three different cases. He thinks from this discovery that in those cases where benefit has been derived from opium, it has arisen from it being given in such large doses as to act as a stimulus not as a sedative.

Occasional occurrence of slight spasmodic afflictions, and that remarkable inquietude and restlessness which particularly distinguish incipient tetanus, were the symptoms present. The same mode of treatment with respect to raising a local inflammation in the wounded part, was pursued, and the power of swallowing remaining sufficient to admit the exhibition of the bark and wine these medicines were freely given. The effect was the same: in a few days perfect health was established. The power of swallowing

precluded the necessity of the use of the Coldbath; in the latter instance: but in both, the tonic medicines were continued for several days after the disappearance of the symptoms._._

Note

*The success attending the use of ~~the cold~~ tonic remedies, in the cure of Tetanus, clearly proves the nature of the disease. the propriety of the cold bath as an auxiliary in the treatment, will no doubt be questioned by some who consider the action of cold uniformly debilitating, and therefore of all remedies the most improper to be employed in a disease, the cure of which shews debility to be its proximate cause. The cold bath however does not act in this disease positively, but indirectly in strengthening the body, by creating a temporary debility of the system, and increasing its sensibility to external stimuli. such as the heat of the Atmosphere or warmth of a bed, and that of frictions after its use. --

Annotations

[Cantharides](#)

A traditional apothecary medicine also known as Spanish fly.

[Dr. Wyer](#)

The Medical Communications of the Massachusetts Medical Society, Vol. 1, 59 Article 5 (1808) identifies a "late Dr. Edward Wyer as Fellow of the Massachusetts Medical Society, and Physician at Halifax, Nova Scotia."

Dr. Wyer's Treatment for Lockjaw recipe from Early Modern Maritime Recipes:

<https://emmr.lib.unb.ca/recipes/203>