

VAN DIE REDAKSIE : EDITORIAL

DIE BEHANDELING EN HANTERING VAN PARAPLEGIESE PASIËNTE

Vir baie geneeshere en ander persone wat betrokke is by die behandeling en hantering van paraplegiese pasiënte, roep die woorde, „paraplegiese pasiënt“ die beeld op van iemand wat aan die bed gekluister is, wat groot oop beddere het, wat met 'n inblywende kateter aan 'n bottel sleg-ruikende urien gekoppel is, en wat onderhewig is aan pynlike spierkrampe. Tot nog maar onlangs was hierdie toestand van sake werklik van toepassing op pasiënte met ernstige siekte van die rugmurg, en tussenkomende infeksie het maar alte dikwels die genadeslag en verlossing van die lyding meegebring.

Uit die artikel van dr. McMurray¹ oor „The treatment and rehabilitation of traumatic paraplegic patients in South Africa“ en die brief van dr. Jacobson² in antwoord daarop, wat vroeër vanjaar in die *Tydskrif* verskyn het, blyk dit hoe 'n groot behoefte daar nog in hierdie land bestaan aan spesiaal-toegeruste eenhede waar paraplegiese pasiënte behandel kan word. Elders bestaan daar wel sulke sentrums wat spesiaal uitgerus en met personeel toegerus is om probleme in hierdie verband te hanteer. Een van die meer bekende inrigtings van dié aard is die Stoke Mandeville-hospitaal by Aylesbury in die Verenigde Koninkryk. Guttman en sy kollegas³ het daar baie voorbereidingswerk gedoen. Die hantering van paraplegiese pasiënte vereis die entoesiastiese samewerking van geneeshere, fisioterapeute, en verpleegsters op 'n groter skaal as in enige ander vertakking van die medisyne. Want dit is slegs deur spanwerk dat goeie resultate behaal kan word en dat die lewe van die pasiënt draagbaar gemaak kan word—that selfs 'n mate van selfstandigheid deur die pasiënt bereik kan word.

Daar is baie aspekte aan die probleem van die paraplegiese pasiënt verbonde, bv. beheer van pyn, spierkamp en verkrimping, beddere, blaasfunksie, en die laaste maar nie die minste nie, rehabilitasie wat betrek die geestestoestand van die pasiënt. Platt en sy medewerkers⁴ het die voorkoming van hierdie toestande beklemtoon, maar die aanvang van komplikasies is dikwels stadig, en as hulle eers gevestig is, ontwikkel hulle vinnig sodat die pasiënte by die hospitaal beland met ernstige beddere en growwe misvormings.

Tans word twee metodes gebruik om spastisiteit en sy meegaande ewels te verlig. Eerstens kan genoem word 'n gekombineerde operasie wat bestaan uit obturator-neurektomie vir die verligting van adduktor-spasma, oorplanting van die spiertendon van die haksenings na die knobbels van die femur (om buiting van die knie in strekking te verander⁵), en eenvoudige tenotomie van die Achilles-tendon om spastiese voetsoolbuiting te verlig. Platt *et al.*⁴ het goeie resultate met hierdie metode bereik. Afgesien van die voorde-hand-liggende nadade van chirurgiese prosedures by hierdie soort pasiënt, gee dié operasie ook aanleiding tot 'n neurologiese tekort, en in baie gevalle verander dit net eenvoudig 'n spastiese ledemaat in een wat slap is.

Meer onlangs is die gebruik van intratekale fenol in 'n medium soos gliserien of „miodil“ beskryf. Die idee om 'n chemiese toksien vir 'n perifere senuwee te gebruik, is nie nuut nie,

nie, en sulke stowwe soos alkohol is in die verlede gebruik. Fenol het baie voordele bo ander toksines wat vinniger werk. Met ondervinding kan dit gelokaliseer word tot 'n paar anterior of posterior wortels, en daarbenewens is sy aksie nie onmiddellik en onomkeerbaar nie. Dit skyn ook 'n selektiewe uitwerking te he op die geleiding van pyn, sonder om ander sensoriese modaliteite aan te tas.^{6,7} Motoriese krag word soms verbeter deur die verligting van sterk spastisiteit, iets wat die oorblyfsels van willekeurige krag kan bedek. Daar is egter een groot nadeel by die gebruik van fenol, waarop alle skrywers wys, naamlik, inmenging met blaasfunksie. Dit gebeur as die fenol die rugmurg self bereik of afsak tot by die sakrale wortels. Met die voorbehoud dat dié gebeurlikheid verhoed kan word, kan die gebruik van fenol werklik tot voordeel wees by die verligting van pyn.

Daar is nie algemene ooreenstemming oor die beste metodes om beddere te behandel nie. Doeltreffende verpleging is waarskynlik die belangrikste faktor. Dit is treffend om te sien hoe 'n diep, aktiewe seer kan opklaar met geduld en toewyding.

Die hantering van blaasfunksie is alreeds uitvoerig bestudeer deur neurofisioloë, neuroloë, en uroloë. Geen twee gevalle van rugmurgsiekte is egter eenders nie. Infeksie van die urienweë moet, indien moontlik, voorkom word, maar dit is selfs onder die beste omstandighede nie altyd moontlik nie. Veel kan egter tog gedoen word om die lewe van die pasiënt draagbaar te maak. Die doel moet wees om 'n outomatiese blaas te verkry in gevalle van hoë algehele afsluiting van die rugmurg. In ander gevalle mag daar oorblyfsels van willekeurige beheer wees, en alle pogings moet in die werk gestel word om dié funksie te probeer bewaar. 'n Klein spastiese blaas moet vermy word, en pasiënte moet aangemoedig word om uren in toenemende hoeveelhede te behou om die „muur“ van die blaas te rek.

Saam met die rehabilitasie van liggaamlike funksies is daar die geestesaanpassing van die pasiënt wat in gedagte gehou moet word. Dit is 'n besondere belangrike faset van die onderhavige probleem. Baie pasiënte slaag wel daarin om hul groot gebrek te aanvaar—'n toestand van sake wat veral geld in gevalle van traumatische skade aan die rugmurg. Dit is slegs nodig om 'n eenheid vir die behandeling van rugmurg-toestande te besoek om die hoë vlak van moed en volharding van die pasiënte en hul versorgers te sien en om te besef watter bevrediging daar spruit uit die doeltreffende en suksesvolle hantering van hierdie probleem.

1. McMurray, T. B. (1961): S. Afr. T. Geenesk., 35, 1.
2. Briewerebrick (1961): *Ibid.*, 35, 100.
3. Guttman, L. in Carling, E. R. en Ross, J. P. reds. (1949): *British Surgical Practice*, 6, 445.
4. Platt, G., Russel, W. R. en Willison, R. G. (1958): Lancet, I, 757.
5. Eggers, G. W. N. (1952): J. Bone Jt Surg., 34 A, 827.
6. Maher, R. M. (1960): Lancet, I, 895.
7. Liversedge, L. A. en Maher, R. M. (1960): Brit. Med. J., 2, 31.

THE MANAGEMENT OF PARAPLEGIC PATIENTS

To most medical attendants the word 'paraplegia' conjures up the image of a bedridden patient beset with gaping bedsores, connected by an indwelling catheter to a bottle of foul urine, and racked by painful muscle spasms. Until fairly recently this indeed was the fate of those patients with severe spinal cord disease. Inevitably death from an intercurrent infection provided a merciful release from great suffering.

Mr. McMurray's article¹ on 'The treatment and rehabilitation of traumatic paraplegic patients in South Africa' and Mr. Jacobson's letter² in reply to some of the views expressed by Mr. McMurray, which were published in this *Journal* some time ago, served as urgent reminders of the dire need for paraplegic centres in this country. Elsewhere there are centres expressly equipped and staffed to deal with the considerable problems of management. One of the better known of these centres is that which is at Stoke Mandeville Hospital near Aylesbury in the United Kingdom. Much pioneer work has been done there by Guttman³ and his colleagues. The management of paraplegic patients requires the enthusiastic cooperation of doctors, physiotherapists, and nurses to a greater extent than in any other branch of medicine. For it is by teamwork alone that good results can be achieved and the patient's life made bearable or even restored to some measure of independence.

There are many aspects to the problem of the paraplegic patient, e.g. control of pain, muscle spasm and contracture, bedsores, bladder function, and last, but by no means least, the mental rehabilitation of the patient. The prevention of these states has been stressed,⁴ but unfortunately the onset of complications is often insidious, and once established these proceed with remarkable rapidity so that patients arrive at hospital with gross bedsores and severe deformities.

Two methods for the relief of spasticity and its concurrent evils have been in recent use. Firstly, a combination operation consisting of obturator neurectomy for the relief of adductor spasm, transplants of the hamstring muscle tendons to the femoral condyles to convert knee flexion to extension,⁵ and simple tenotomy of the Achilles tendon to relieve spastic equinus, has been used. Good results from this method of treatment has been recorded by Platt *et al.*⁴ However, apart from the obvious disadvantages of any surgical procedure in these patients, this method does add to the neurological deficit and, in many instances, simply converts a paralysed spastic limb to a paralysed flaccid one.

More recently the use of intrathecal phenol in a vehicle such as glycerol or 'myodil' has been described. The idea of using a chemical toxin on the peripheral nerve is not new and in the

past substances such as alcohol have been used. Phenol has many advantages over other more rapidly acting toxins. With experience it can be localized to only a few anterior or posterior roots and, moreover, its action is not immediate and irreversible. In addition it appears to have a selective action on pain transmission without noticeably affecting other sensory modalities.^{6,7} Motor power is sometimes improved by the relief of extreme spasticity which may mask any remains of voluntary power. There is however one major drawback to the use of phenol which is noted by all authors, and that is interference with bladder function. This occurs when phenol reaches the cord itself or descends to the sacral roots. Provided this can be avoided, the use of phenol for relief of pain and spasticity appears to have real advantage.

There is no firm agreement on the best method for treating bedsores. Efficient nursing plays the major rôle. It is remarkable how a deep, fungating ulcer can be made to heal with care and patience; and this provides visible evidence of devoted nursing.

The management of bladder function has been extensively studied by neurophysiologists, neurologists, and urologists. Suffice it to say that in spinal cord disease no two cases are alike. If possible, urinary infection is to be avoided, but unfortunately this is unlikely even in the best of hands. Yet much can be done to make the patients' life more tolerable. The aim is to produce an automatic bladder in those cases where there is complete, high cord disease. In others there may be remnants of voluntary control and every effort should be directed towards preserving this function. A small spastic bladder is to be avoided, and patients should be encouraged to try to retain urine in increasing amounts in order to stretch the bladder wall.

Simultaneously with the rehabilitation of bodily function, the adjustment of the patients' mental outlook must be considered. This is an extremely important facet of the problem under consideration. The majority of patients manage to come to terms with their great disability. This is especially so in cases of traumatic spinal cord damage. One has only to visit a spinal cord unit to witness the high morale of these patients and their attendants to realize the singular gratification provided for all concerned by the successful management of this problem.

1. McMurray, T. B. (1961): S. Afr. Med. J., 35, 1.
2. Correspondence (1961): *Ibid.*, 35, 100.
3. Guttman, L. in Carling, E. R. and Ross, J. P. eds. *British Surgical Practice*, 6, 445.
4. Eggers, G. W. N. (1952): J. Bone Jt Surg. 34 A, 827.
5. Platt, G., Russel, W. R. and Willison, R. G. (1958): Lancet, I, 757.
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