

Lindsay (C. A.)

PRECAUTIONS RESPECTING
Diphtheria and Scarlet Fever.

ISSUED BY ORDER OF THE
BOARD OF HEALTH
OF
NEW HAVEN.

Lindsay (C. A.)



SPECIAL REPORT

TO THE BOARD OF HEALTH.

Gentlemen :—

— Because of the widespread prevalence of Diphtheria throughout the country and the costly experience of other cities, both in sacrifice of life and expenditure of treasure in checking its ravages, it would seem proper that this Board, the appointed conservators of the public health, should, at this time, offer such suggestions as will serve to protect our citizens from similar sufferings from this disease.

Diphtheria is both a contagious and an infectious disease ; it is, moreover, pre-eminently one of the class of FILTH diseases—that is, it occurs most frequently and in the most malignant and fatal form where dampness and dirt do most prevail. The means of protection, therefore, obviously lie in avoidance of exposure to its presence and in the most scrupulous attention to cleanliness. Absolute isolation of the sick, the most rigid purity of surroundings, aided by disinfection when required, would probably exterminate the disease. The veteran sanitarian, Dr. E. M. Snow, of Providence, says that where there is abundant sunlight, dryness, cleanliness and pure air, diphtheria cannot prevail.—The same conditions will protect almost as effectually from most other dangerous diseases. Such being the truth, neither individuals or communities can afford to ignore the fact that they are in a great degree responsible for their own health.

The Board of Health of New Haven would make the following recommendations to those not familiar with the care of patients suffering from either diphtheria or scarlet fever. When a case occurs in any family, the sick person should be placed in a room apart from the other inmates of the house, and should be nursed as far as possible by one person only. The sick chamber should be well warmed, well aired and exposed to sunlight ; its furniture should be such as can be cleansed without injury, and all superfluous things as window and table drapery, woolen carpets and the like should be removed. The family should not mingle with other people. Visitors should be warned of the presence of a contagious disease, and *children should not be admitted to the house.*

All clothing removed from the patient should be at once placed in boiling water ; instead of handkerchiefs, soft pieces of linen or cotton cloth should be used and immediately burned. Disinfectants should be placed

in all the vessels which receive the expectoration or other discharges from the patient. Disinfectants should also be freely used in the sick room. Those which destroy bad odors without causing others are best, such as solutions of nitrate of lead and chloride of zinc.

The sick person should not mingle with others until fully recovered, and in cases of scarlet fever until all roughness of the skin, due to the disease, has disappeared, because the exfoliated skin is especially infectious.

The disinfection of the sick room should be thorough. The walls should be dry-rubbed and the cloths used burned without shaking, the ceiling should be scraped and lime washed. The floor and woodwork should be washed with soap and water. The clothing or bedding used by the patient or nurse should be purified by boiling for at least one hour, and should always be cleaned by themselves, and under no circumstances should they be sent to a laundry. In case of death the body should be placed as early as practicable in the coffin, with disinfectants, and the coffin tightly closed.

Children certainly and in most cases adults should not attend a funeral from a house in which a death from diphtheria or scarlet fever has occurred. But with suitable precautions it is not necessary that the burial should be strictly private, provided that the corpse be not in any way exposed.

Because children are especially liable to take and to spread these diseases, and because schools afford a free opportunity for this, every child from any family in which a case of either of these diseases has occurred should be excluded from school, and be re-admitted not sooner than one month from the beginning of the disease, except upon certificate of some competent physician that it will be safe.

All the above precautions concern the dangers of contagion. But the continued prevalence of these diseases in any community is probable evidence of insanitary surroundings and of sources of sickness, partially or wholly preventable. The most exemplary housewife whose home is the very model of neatness and order, may have all her efforts defeated in a sanitary sense, by a defective sink trap or a leaky drain pipe, or an overflowing cesspool, or a misplaced privy vault, or an undrained cellar, or even by a heap of decaying garbage in her neighbor's yard.

Therefore look well to the surroundings. Abolish filth, remove dampness and all sources of foul air, especially from living and sleeping rooms. Disinfect thoroughly all suspected places in yards and neglected corners, and often and again, those foul repositories of pollution, the privy vault and the cesspool, which of all filth influences prevail with greater force than any other against human life.

Respectfully submitted,

C. A. LINDSLEY,

Health Officer.

N. B.—The following disinfectant is both very cheap and efficient :
Take of copperas (sulphate of iron) 5 pounds and dissolve in 3 gallons of water.

