

DISORDERS OF THE ALIMENTARY SYSTEM RELATIVE TO VISUAL GERIATRICS

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Concluded from the last issue

An entire paper might well be devoted to the physiological activity of metabolism and its relationship with normal, functional and pathological eye conditions. In a single short sentence Metabolism means the ingestion of food, utilization thereof, and the elimination of unwanted and poisonous by-products. Quite often a patient is told by his doctor that his liver is sluggish or out of order, but few doctors are able to define with a degree of accuracy the symptoms that are preferable to a disordered liver. Functional derangement of the liver and renal insufficiency are intimately associated and are mutually responsible for the occurrence of many eye symptoms as well as those that are attributed to defective elimination of waste products. Cathartics, laxatives and enemas are given to clear the lower bowel, and usually some relief is experienced by the patient, but unless the proper steps are taken this relief is only a temporary nature. The treatment must be directed elsewhere, for the retention of waste products in the bowel may be symptoms of something else, and not a cause in its self. It is common experience that if the liver be sluggish and not doing its work efficiently, a greater burden is placed upon the kidneys, which must over work in their efforts to eliminate waste excessive quantity of waste material.

All tissues of the body are bathed in lymph, which reaches them through the walls of the capillaries, and each individual cell takes from the fluid surrounding it the nourishment which it needs, and casts into it the effected products of its metabolism. In health there is a delicate physiological balance between assimilation and excretion, and a breakdown in that arrangement is one of the earliest departures from health.

Let us quote a bit from Dr. A. Ramsey on this all important subject: "If health is to be maintained, there must be not only a proper supply of suitable food and fresh air – which we do not have in the Los Angeles area due to air pollution by smog – but also a thorough elimination of waste products. Arrangements for that purpose exist in every organ of the body, all of which are mutually dependent, so that if the physiological function of one be impaired the others suffer with it... The kidney is not only the chief elimination organ of the body; it also maintains a proper water balance in the tissue and exercised a controlling or regulating influence over all other organs concerned in the excretion of waste products; by that means it ensures a standard quality of the blood. The subject of renal inadequacy is therefore of great interest to every general portioner and Visual Geriatrician, because a very high percentage of the symptoms of ill-health is due to the retention of toxins in the blood. It must be admitted, however, that renal inadequacy presents neither signs nor symptoms that are pathognomonic, and it is very unlikely that in the first instance the patient will make any complaints referable to

the kidney. The truth is that renal inadequacy must be looked for as the probable cause of symptoms referable to organs other than the kidney.”

Continuing from Dr. Ramsey: “The first question to be answered is: How can the functional activity of the kidney be determined? The only person who can supply the information necessary for the answer to that question is the patient himself. He finds that he cannot now do many of the things he has been in the habit of doing. He consults his doctor to find out the cause of his difficulties. He states that until a few months ago he was able to eat and drink to his heart’s content without feeling the slightest discomfort, even after occasions when he knew he had exceeded. He says he never knew what it was to have a headache – to that we may add - - - eye-ache – and considered that he had excellent health, but now many of his favorite foods disagree; his digestion is easily upset. Of his own accord he has given up smoking and drinking, and any form of alcohol upsets him. Not only is he unable to take certain articles of diet but the foods he is allowed must be taken in small quantity. He complains of this handicap. Life has lost many of its pleasures because of restrictions which hamper him on every hand; his work costs more effort, and he finds his strength is easily exhausted.

When it is found there is a renal inadequacy every organ of the body may be implicated. The eye, owing to the transparency of its structures, is often a mirror which is reflected much of what is going on in other parts of the body, and in the study of diseases of the kidneys the ophthalmoscopic examination may play an important role in the etiology of a large number of inflammatory diseases affecting the eyes and their appendages.

There has been very little work done in this field by the medical men and it is a field productive of immeasurable benefit both to the patient and to the practitioner. The wisest procedure for the Optometric Visual Geriatrician is to work his cases with some good medical interest retaining at all times the full control of the patient. The difficulty of vision first caused the patient to seek the assistance of a professional man, and that therefore is the end object in view. Any other benefits or discoveries made are secondary, and should be considered as such.

If this paper does nothing more than to direct your attention to these closing paragraphs it will have served its purpose well.

Respectfully submitted by:

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