

# ANNOTATIONS

## TUBERCULOSIS AMONG CHILDREN AND YOUNG ADULTS<sup>1</sup>

THE volume is a revised edition of TUBERCULOSIS AMONG CHILDREN published in 1930. The original text has been rewritten in several particulars and an entirely new section presented on the general subject of tuberculosis in young adults. The book is divided into three parts: Tuberculosis in Infancy; Tuberculosis in Childhood; and Tuberculosis Among Young Adults. In each section the author presents the practical working concepts of our present knowledge.

While he mentions tuberculosis in adults at various points the general impression remains that the ultimate control of the disease in his mind is a problem among the age groups through young adult life. Also, the text naturally reflects the experience of the author in the Middle West where the death rates from tuberculosis are much lower than in many other places, particularly the Atlantic Seaboard. As important as these groups may be, they, after all, should be considered in the light of their relative importance with the adult group.

If as he states under dangers of infection—"The only rational attitude is to protect all human beings, of whatever age, against exposure"—then it must follow that our first concern is to control open foci of infection, which are far more numerous in the adult population.

The author has done an admirable piece of work in his extensive reviews of the vast literature on this subject, which is indicated in the complete bibliography following each chapter. He has in his own inimitable style shorn the welter of scientific findings, both pro and con on a given subject, of their apparent meaningless phrases and put them into succinct statements of practical import. Thus this volume is a distinct

<sup>1</sup> Myers, J. Arthur: TUBERCULOSIS AMONG CHILDREN AND YOUNG ADULTS. Illinois, Springfield, Charles C. Thomas. 1938.

contribution to the present day knowledge of tuberculosis, and should appeal to the general practitioner, the medical student, the nurse, the social worker, and the nonprofessional group interested in tuberculosis work. He points out that from an experience of over 15 years that the child who reacts positively to the tuberculin test is five times more likely to develop clinical tuberculosis during the teen age period than the child who reacts negatively. Thus he states: "However, to continue to make periodically large numbers of x-ray films of the chests of *young* children, even those reacting positively to the tuberculin test, would be wasteful as far as tuberculosis is concerned."

The chapter on sensitivity and immunity to tuberculosis is worthy of reading by all interested in this field, and it is around this thesis that the book has been written. The author admits sensitization of the tissues that may wax or wane with altered conditions, and from this very fact the question arises as to the relationship of sensitization to immunity—if it exists. He concludes wisely that from existing evidence it is unsafe to draw conclusions from the results obtained in any one animal species. Also that the incidence of disease in the various races is not an index to immunity. This is a newer concept than usually expressed on this phase of the subject. In a single sentence he expresses what is perhaps the most practical interpretation of immunity—"Perhaps there is no physician in the country who has enough confidence in the immunity established by the first infection type of tuberculosis to expose his own infant to tuberculous patients, in order to develop a so-called protective infection."

In discussing the preventive aspects of tuberculosis in either of the three age groups presented, the point is made that a single survey is of limited value as it indicates a condition existing only at that time. The complete program must involve a retesting to detect as near as possible the time of infection, and a subsequent follow-up based on the problem presented and not a matter of mechanical routine. This is an ideal program that can rarely be followed, particularly in those areas with a high death rate. Here again each community must allocate its efforts in a relative proportion to the presenting problem, and usually it will be found that a major portion of the emphasis should be directed toward the adult group.

In the section dealing with young adults the author discusses primarily high school and college pupils, and medical and nursing students. Much space is given to the reinfection types seen so frequently and particularly the treatment required. Here the author emphasizes the use of artificial

pneumothorax in minimal lesions limited to one lung and proved to be progressive. The indications for such care are explicit and it is to be hoped that those who are more enthusiastic about pneumothorax will not interpret it to mean wholesale collapse therapy for all early cases. The development of mass survey programs today are revealing hundreds of early infiltrates many of which will resolve satisfactorily with bed rest, but in the name of the public health there is a growing sentiment from some quarters that pneumothorax be employed more promptly in all early cases.

The author has very greatly emphasized the importance of the private practitioner's place in the general control program. He also raises the point of certification of nurses, teachers, as well as households with regard to tuberculosis. Such a plan is not as difficult as may be expected and can be accomplished by the practitioner in his office in a great many instances.

This volume is a lucid presentation of practical working facts on the present day concepts of a subject that continues to be a major problem of the public health.

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## SYPHILIS, GONORRHEA AND THE PUBLIC HEALTH<sup>1</sup>

THE authors of this book are to be congratulated upon the success with which they have solved the many problems which must have arisen in presenting the salient facts about the natural history and control of these two diseases to the diverse groups which are, or should be, interested. The book is written for "health officers, physicians, nurses, social workers and public health workers in general, as well as that part of the general public which is interested in the control program."

The three main divisions of the work will appeal to different groups of readers, but each is comprehensive and authoritative enough to justify getting the book for its sake alone. The first main division (Part II) outlines for syphilis and gonorrhoea separately the basic facts about the causative agent, course of infection, diagnosis, treatment—including unfavorable reactions to treatment—and modes of infection. It is unfortunate that a more definite position could not have been taken on the treatment

<sup>1</sup> Nelson, Nels A. and Crain, Gladys L.: *SYPHILIS, GONORRHEA AND THE PUBLIC HEALTH*. New York, The Macmillan Company, 1938. 360 pages.