

THE DEPARTMENT OF THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF COLLEGES OF PHARMACY

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DEPARTMENT.

Teachers of practical dispensing will be interested in the following article by Professor Cox. The paper discusses a problem which is of great interest to all professors of pharmacy. Interest in it is becoming greater each year as our colleges of pharmacy make connection with student health services or hospitals and give their students practice in the dispensing of *bona fide* physicians' prescriptions.—C. B. JORDAN, *Editor*.

OUTSIDE PREPARATION FOR LABORATORY IN DISPENSING.

BY C. L. COX.

When Professor Nichols asked me to suggest a topic for discussion at this Seminar, I suggested the problem that has given me the most difficulty, "Outside Preparation for Laboratory in Dispensing," never thinking that I would be requested to lead the discussion.

At the school with which I have been connected, we have three semesters of dispensing, the second semester of the second year, and both semesters of the third year. Hereafter I will refer to them as first, second and third semesters of dispensing. In the first semester of dispensing the student is required to spend one or more laboratory periods, of three hours each, in compounding each of the classes of extemporaneous preparations as, infusions and decoctions, waters, pills, capsules, ointments, suppositories, etc., neatness, accuracy and technique being emphasized. In the second semester of dispensing the student is given prescriptions having incompatibilities. He is given careful instructions as to compounding them in the least objectionable way. In the third semester of dispensing, the student must depend upon his own knowledge in reading and compounding prescriptions.

Now what kind of a written report should we require of the student on work done in the laboratory? I have tried to make a "blanket" assignment, one that would cover all prescriptions. For example, I have required the student to calculate and itemize the cost of the ingredients that enter each prescription, using current drug magazines for drug quotations. This assignment gives the student a review of pharmaceutical arithmetic, changing from one system of weights and measures to another, specific gravity, formula cutting, etc. This also familiarizes the student with relative costs, and may encourage him to read current magazines. As soon as this assignment begins to become tiresome and the average student shows proficiency, I change the assignment. Another assignment is to require the student to calculate the dose of each ingredient of the prescription and compare it with the official dose. With this I sometimes ask for the medicinal action of each ingredient, and how the other ingredients of the prescription modify the action of the principal ingredient. Asking the student to report the order of mixing, during the first two semesters, is useless, for you are only requiring him to copy what he has read in his text. I sometimes ask the students of the second semester of dispensing to suggest to the prescriber, other drugs that could be used in the prescription that would have a similar action, but not the same incompatibilities; this reviews both the chemistry and pharmacology of the ingredients.

Students of the third semester of dispensing are required to copy the prescription on a regular-sized prescription blank and write the method of compounding, criticism, comment or changes on the back of the blank. This he hands in to the instructor with the finished prescription. No other report is required of the student. The student may be called upon in class to give the proper method of compounding, which is an incentive to him to review his work for this quiz.

While not under the head of "Outside Preparation for Laboratory in Dispensing," I would like to hear criticism also on my plan of assignment and grading the student in laboratory preparations. I assign more prescriptions than the average student can compound. All work must be done in the laboratory, and within the laboratory period. All preparations must be labeled, capped and wrapped. This encourages speed. If the package is not neat it is thrown aside without further inspection. The same applies to the cap and label if it is a bottle preparation. If these inspections are passed the preparation itself is inspected. No preparation is given credit if it does not pass all inspections. This places neatness and accuracy paramount to speed, for it avails a student nothing to hurry through five prescriptions and have only two accepted, when by exercising more care he could have finished three and had all pass. The grade of the student depends upon the number of "passed" prescriptions he submits during the semester.

THE INCIDENCE OF VARIOUS DISEASES AT DIFFERENT AGES.

Until recently the best index of the incidence or prevalence of most diseases has been the number of deaths, according to Surgeon-General H. S. Cumming of the U. S. Public Health Service. Since the fatality of different diseases varies greatly, death records cannot indicate very accurately the number of cases that actually occur. There has been a need for complete records of actual disease prevalence in the general population which has been long recognized by public health workers and students. While this need was being met to some extent by occasional records of sickness among school children and employed workers, the available information did not cover the entire life span nor did it include persons not at work or at school.

In an attempt to supply these needed data, the U. S. Public Health Service undertook a continuous survey of a general population group in Hagerstown, Maryland. Records were made of all of the illnesses which occurred among persons of different ages and of both sexes, and the cause was ascertained for each illness in so far as possible. The practicing physicians of that locality coöperated in ascertaining the cause of illness.

The results of this study in so far as they relate to the incidence of various diseases according to age have just been published by the U. S. Public Health Service, and constitute a volume of material which is more complete and detailed than that of any other study so far published in this country or abroad. The population group studied included about 8000 persons, and it was canvassed continuously by experienced field assistants for nearly two and a half years. Since this group was fairly representative of a typical small city in the middle eastern part of the United States, the statistics obtained afford a probably fair sample of the general population of this section.

The results of this study are given in numerous detailed tables and charts.