

A UTILIZATION WHICH CONSERVES.*

BY J. C. PEACOCK.

The explanation of this paradoxical title is the utilization of stock on hand in order to conserve capital.

The specific application of the plan is to those drugs which come under the Harrison Act, especially the tablet, pill and such other forms as are possible of use under certain circumstances.

The quantity of these drugs, which is dispensed by the average pharmacist is not large, at most. But they represent invested money which, being idle, is consuming the profit that some other item yields. It is very probable that most pharmacists, who anticipated the wants on physicians' prescriptions before the days of this law, found, when they made their first inventory under it, an accumulation of various tablets, pills, elixirs, syrups, etc., of many strengths, and, perhaps, of several makes.

It is also quite as probable that, with each succeeding inventory, they have been impressed with the extent to which this stock has remained on hand.

And, surely, after one or two such presentations of this fact, the pharmacist must realize that this portion of his capital is seriously inactive.

The tablet forms of cocaine, morphine, codeine and heroine, as alkaloids and salts, are perhaps the greater portion of such stock. There are tablet triturates and hypodermic tablets of all, and in addition to these, pills, elixirs, syrups and some other forms of the three opiates.

The pharmacist who would like to get rid of these can do so by constant attention to the calls for such drugs on prescriptions, for there are many opportunities wherein a tablet can be used as well as the powder, by merely crushing it. Those who, prior to the law, had been accustomed to using tablets of such drugs, whether the dispensing tablets of some manufacturers or the common triturate, instead of weighing the drug from the stock bottle, must have found this a very natural process by which to reduce their amounts of the uncalled for items. They, no doubt, have long since lessened their stock of such drug forms to what little is really needed since the law went into force.

Compactness of the stock of each article as to strength helps very much. For instance, portions of tubes of hypodermic tablets of the same strength should be put into as few full tubes as will carry them, to prevent reordering when there is enough at hand. This remark applies equally to other tablets and other forms of the substances.

Though it requires time to utilize large stocks by such methods, they will eventually be consumed, and, because these goods need not be restocked, that much capital conserved. To that end these materials must be kept well within memory, but to keep them so preëminent in our thoughts is a task indeed for anyone, since, in the rush of work, we are apt to be influenced more by vision than by memory and use that to which habit leads us. It will therefore be found better to take a physical means of facility, than to tax the memory.

* Read before Section on Practical Pharmacy and Dispensing, A. Ph. A., Chicago meeting, 1918.

A very simple reminder, which has been found thoroughly practicable, is to tie the bottles of the tablets, or other packages, to the container of the drug itself, so that the hand will not fail to find the article to be used.

If it is not advisable to mix lots, as previously suggested, tie all of the packages of the same strength to the container and always use the smaller lot first.

Not every prescription will permit of such use, and, though many do, none but appropriate uses are in mind; for deceit cannot qualify as conservation.

As an illustration of a proper use: An open package of a considerable quantity of one-eighth grain codeine sulphate triturates are to be reduced to near requirements. The bottle is accordingly tied to the codeine sulphate bottle, and, when the prescription comes in, calling for four grains of codeine sulphate in three ounces of Brown Mixture thirty-two of these tablets containing four grains of codeine sulphate (and some sugar or sugar of milk) are used. Following the utilization of the one-eighth grain tablets, others, such as one-sixth, one-quarter and one-half are used in the same manner, perhaps in succession, or, with the visible reminder to prompt the memory, these strengths may be thought of and used in preference, according to circumstances.

Thus, lot after lot of these needless items are reduced or entirely consumed and proper record made of the number and strength of the tablets so used along with any other data needed to properly check up the inventory.

This example of course extends to other tablets as well as to those of codeine sulphate.

Pills may likewise be used if reducible to powder. Gelatin coated pills are better suited for use in capsules since the material of the capsule itself, the final integument, is also gelatin.

The utilization of some of the other forms of the narcotics, which may be used in similar ways, is a matter for thought in each individual instance.

If kept in mind by one means or another, there will be found an occasional opportunity to utilize these substances, but the plan must pass the censorship of conscientious consideration.

IS RESEARCH WORK ALONG THE LINES SUGGESTED BY THE LAST REVISION OF THE PHARMACOPOEIA POSSIBLE OR PRACTICAL IN SCHOOLS OF PHARMACY?*

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The foregoing interrogatory is pertinent and timely, it seems to the writer of this paper. Pertinent for either of two reasons, and practical because the experience of the biological laboratories connected with the large drug manufacturing houses of our own and foreign countries has fully proven it to be so.

As to the first query, its pertinency. The fact that for more than a score of years wholesale manufacturers of drugs have found pharmacodynamics necessary in assaying all glucoside-containing drugs, and many others, discloses a field

* Read before Joint Session Section on Legislation, A. Ph. A., American Conference of Pharmaceutical Faculties and National Association of Boards of Pharmacy, Chicago meeting, 1918.