

INFUSION OF DIGITALIS U. S. P.

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The following report is taken from the files of the Food and Drug Department of the State of Colorado, and was submitted by this writer in his official capacity as State Drug Inspector:

"The question of how the physiologic test upon a package of digitalis shall be regarded by the retail druggist has been brought to the attention of this office.

"Inasmuch as there is no official, chemical or physiologic standard for the drug, a strict construction of the law of this State requires that all official preparations be made according to the proportions laid down in the United States Pharmacopœia.

"In all probability, the next revision of the Pharmacopœia will contain physiologic tests for such potent drugs as cannot be valued chemically. It would therefore seem fair for the conscientious pharmacist to anticipate the action of the Committee on Revision and dispense such important a remedy as infusion Digitalis with a careful regard for toxicity and therapeutic powers as shown by trustworthy physiologic assays.

"A visit to a number of Denver stores shows that a principal source of supply for digitalis leaf is one British firm, who now place upon each container the strength of the drug, as compared with an arbitrary standard of their own. The reputation of the firm throughout the world merits for their standard and similar declarations the careful consideration of pharmacists and physicians."

Every pharmacist recognizes the necessity for standardization and rubrics of purity, especially for plant drugs. It is a well known fact that we have no chemical or physiological test for determining the toxic or therapeutic potency of some of our most important plant drugs, including digitalis and the U. S. P., is silent as to physiological tests.

The main object of a legalized authority, such as the U. S. P. and N. F. is to secure uniformity in the strength and character of official substances and preparations. Now in the case of digitalis, known to have a wide range of variation, in medicinal value, how is this uniformity to be secured? Obviously, not by adhering to the fixed proportion given for preparing infusion digitalis. Or will someone contend that the physician must observe this varying strength of an official preparation, at the bedside and regulate the dose accordingly?

Technically speaking, any deviation from official formulas is violation of law in the State of Colorado, but in the case of infusion digitalis, in the writer's opinion, a rigid compliance with the letter of the law is a flagrant violation of its spirit and purpose, and should not be countenanced in any well regulated pharmacy.

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J. LEON LASCOFF.

For many years past pharmaceutical journals have given much room to the discussion of the subject of digitalis. Still, little or nothing has been mentioned about the infusion of this most important drug. Of all the infusions, that have