

*drobromid* and *hyoscin hydrobromid*, though they are commercially, pharmacally and therapeutically identical. Following are a few unnecessary redundancies:

Belladonnae Radix (Belladonna Root)	Colchici Semen (Colchicum Seed)
Belladonnae Folia (Belladonna Leaves)	Cinnamomum Saigonicum
Colchici Cormus (Colchicum Root)	Cinnamomum Zeylanicum
Hyoscyamus	} These drugs are so similar to belladonna that there seems to be no reason for officializing them and their preparations.
Fluidextractum Hyoscyami	
Tinctura Hyoscyami	
Stramonium	
Tinctura Stramonii	
Unguentum Stramonii	Liquor Sodii Arsenitis (Solution of Sodium Arsenite)
Hamamelidis Cortex (Witchhazel Bark)	Viburnum Opuli (Cramp Bark)
Hamamelidis Folia (Witchhazel Leaves)	Viburnum Prunifolium (Black Haw Viburnum)
Hyoscinae Hydrobromidum	
Scopolaminae Hydrobromidum	
Liquor Potassii Arsenitis (Solution of Potassium Arsenite)	

THE DEADLY BICHLORIDE TABLET.\*

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The rather large number of accidental poisonings by the careless taking of mercuric chloride tablets for those of some other less harmful drug is appalling, to state the least. Within the last few weeks, no less than nine to ten cases have been reported by the daily papers, in which serious consequences have resulted. The large percentage of deaths that have been recorded through the careless or ignorant handling of these tablets calls for stronger safeguards than the ordinary precautions now in force. The publicity given this form of poison, and its potent action, has created in the lay mind a new and easy source for obtaining new material for criminal purposes or self destruction.

The question therefore arises, what can be done to safeguard the innocent public against this new form of danger which seems to be increasing daily. These safeguards do not rest so much in legislative measures, which is the generally accepted plan for promoting the public safety, but more in well-devised public education as to the toxicity of such tablets, and such other efficient means as will forewarn the innocent in the event that danger is near.

Statistics show that the greater portion of deaths are accidental. For this reason safeguards should be thrown more about the tablet itself, and the package that contains it. That the "bichloride tablet" is deadly, can best be gleaned from the high percentage of fatalities incident to its absorption.

The records up to date show, that out of some 756 known cases, over 56 percent have proved fatal, while something less than 44 percent have recovered. These recoveries have resulted from immediate medical attention, and the small amount of the drug absorbed.

Much of this horror and sorrow has resulted from the heedless taking of these tablets by mistake for others of a dissimilar composition, which they closely re-

\*Presented to Pennsylvania Pharmaceutical Association, June, 1913, in answer to Query No. 7. What new expedient can be devised to prevent poisoning through the mistaking of Corrosive Sublimite tablets for ordinary tablets used in medicine, numerous cases of such nature being reported from time to time?

semble in size, shape, color, and sometimes in taste. What seems to be the greatest evil in this connection is that these fatal mistakes usually take place in the evening, and at a time and under conditions in which the finger's touch is the only guiding element in locating what seems to be the desired headache tablet.

Therefore, innovations of any kind, no matter how ingenious they may be, providing they are not impracticable, should be received for serious consideration, if not for approbation. Even a slight increase in cost over the present expense should not deter the creation of new safeguards.

As possible methods of providing sufficient warning as to the dangerous character of bichloride tablets that will be suggestive both to the sense of sight and touch the writer submits the following propositions, together with specimens of tablets to illustrate the proposed new shapes.

First, a compressed tablet, shaped like that of a skull, with the contour of the shape greatly depressed at the points of indentation, colored with methylene blue, and stamped with the word "poison" in a different color, would be a step in the direction of greater safety.

Second, a tablet twice as long as its breadth, similar in form to that of a trapezoid, with serrated edges, colored with eosin, like samples submitted, marked "poison" in blue, and then wrapped in black tin foil, which has the skull and cross-bones pictured all over its surface, with the word, "poisonous" done in white.

Third, an irregular, grotesque shaped tablet, similar to that of a kidney, the midway or central depression markedly deep and wide, like samples submitted, colored with methyl green, with the word "poison" embossed upon its surface, and the tablet encased in a suitable flat gelatine capsule, just large enough to admit one tablet. This form would be an exceptional means of creating suspicion.

Samples of the last two suggestions are herewith submitted, the size of which is arbitrary, but should be large in order to insure greater safety.

By making the tablets a trifle larger than the ordinary size tablets, adults and especially children would find greater difficulty in swallowing them. By having them of irregular shape, with ragged edges, swallowing would not only be difficult, but they would be the more readily recognized in the dark by the finger's touch. Even in the daytime, its peculiar form would tend to create an association of ideas in connection with that of poison and death.

By wrapping them in appropriately colored and specially designed foil, or encasing them in suitably colored gelatin capsules, the mere act of removing the tablet from its wrapper would in a manner act as a stay of execution by psychological interference. In short, a feeling of suspicion would ensue, thereby acting as a warning before the fatal move is made.

As to colors, it is knowingly true, that the greens, blues, and reds are repugnant to most people, and are taken as indications of danger or poison. The color of the tablet itself would not only serve as a danger signal, but if dissolved in water, the solution also, owing to its color, would carry the same impression.

Before the machinery of the law begins to grind out ill-advised enactments, it would be well for the various pharmaceutical houses to enter into some form of understanding as to this vital question which is reaching alarming proportions.

By way of suggestion, the following would serve as a foundation to work upon:

1st. That no tablet be compressed, or massed into a gelatin capsule that contains more than 1-6 grain of corrosive sublimate (or some other agreed upon maximum amount) unless so made as to denote its potency.

2d. That no tablet be compressed that is colorless, round, ovoid, or oblong in shape, which contains dangerous amounts of corrosive sublimate.

3d. That separate and distinct packages be used for dispensing potent mercuric chloride tablets to the trades and the professions.

4th. That all mercuric tablets for external purposes, containing dangerous amounts of the drug, be colored with some form of soluble dye, one strongly suggestive of danger or poison, such colors as the greens, blues or reds.

5th. That all tablets of this type be oddly formed, marked with the word poison so as to make them easy of identification and differentiation, in the dark as well as the light, and be made large so as not to be easily swallowed.

6th. That these tablets be covered with some suitable covering like colored foil, or encased in gelatin capsules strikingly colored, and bearing the word poison all over its surface.

7th. That they be dispensed in bottles only, preferably odd in shape and of blue glass, with a label attached giving directions as to use and care in handling, printed in red.

8th. That aside from the directions as to use, the label also bear advice as to "first aid measures" that are considered effective, with the appellation—"POISON, For External Use Only—In case of Poisoning Send for a Physician At Once."

9th. That a separate label be affixed to each package on which is boldly printed the following—Not To Be Swallowed. Do Not Remove The Remainder Of These Tablets From This Package. Keep Bottle And Contents Away From All Medicines Used for Internal Purposes.

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#### COFFIN-SHAPE FOR BICHLORIDE TABLETS.\*

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When carefully reading and studying this query one is impressed by the suggestive manner in which it has been worded, for the idea I have to offer for your consideration is largely the result of the query's phraseology.

You will observe that it suggests a *new expedient*, which is what you surely will find to be the basis of the suggestion I herewith offer.

The similarity in the weight, shape and general appearance of Corrosive Sublimate Tablets and Alkaline Antiseptic Tablets, and many headache tablets has

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