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MADRAS RECORD OFFICE

GOVERNMENT OF MADRAS

Revenue DEPARTMENT

G.O. No.

B.P. No.

1354

Press

Mis.

Dated

26.6.1875 196

Not to be folded or roughly handled

DA

Medical.

No. 16. Read the following letter from Surgeon-General E. G. BALFOUR, Surgeon-General, Indian Medical Department, to the Honorable D. F. CARMICHAEL, Officiating Chief Secretary to Government, Fort St. George, dated Fort St. George, 25th May 1875, No. 288:—

Under the Orders in No. 579 of 3rd May 1871 and No. 1226 of 26th November 1873 the various police stations of the Madras Presidency were supplied with small quantities of liquor of ammonia to be used for people bitten by poisonous snakes.

2. I have the honor to furnish a letter and a return from the Inspector-General of Police showing that in the past year ammonia was used in 181 cases, in 165 of which the bitten persons survived and the remaining sixteen died. Of the recovered cases thirteen are said to have been bitten by cobras; but the possibility of ammonia curing a person bitten by this poisonous snake cannot be accepted. Its use in curing the pain from a scorpion sting may be admitted, and it must also be of great value in the state of partial collapse into which many of the natives of India fall when bitten by a non-poisonous snake or scorpion.

3. The Order of Government, No. 1226, of 26th November 1873, permitted the retention of ammonia at police stations for another year and ordered careful returns to be then made. The return now received seems to have been accurately prepared, and I think that for the future the Police Department or any other of the departments may, if they wish, be allowed to indent for ammonia in the ordinary course of business.

4. The use of ammonia in snake-bites was advocated by Surgeon-Major (now Deputy Surgeon-General) Fayrer, and was ordered to be tried in this Presidency in the Proceedings of Government of 3rd May 1871. But the rapidity with which the poison acts does not permit the hope that much good result would follow the use of ammonia, even if it were a drug on which reliance could be placed as a curative agent. It is not probable, however, that its merits exceed those of strong arrack, and other means ought not to be overlooked. I attach copy of a circular memorandum which I issued in 1871 giving publicity to Surgeon-Major Shortt's views as to the value of liquor potassæ in poisonous snake-bites. As noted in a

previous letter, the humane suggestion of paying persons for each poisonous snake they may bring would be very costly, because ordinary natives of India regard the most harmless snakes as poisonous, and because of the difficulty experienced by all non-scientific people in distinguishing harmless from poisonous snakes. I think I have heard or read that the snakes produce in June and July, and if this be correct any measures taken for their destruction might therefore be most diligently pursued in the months of April and May. There are plenty of people in the country accurately acquainted with all the poisonous snakes; amongst others, the Yenadi race from the Sriharikotta jungles, some of whom are guardians of the snake shrine at Vasaripad. But it seems to me that natural means, to one of which

No. 23, of 27th March 1871, paragraph 6.

I alluded in a previous letter, might be more largely employed to destroy them.

*Proceedings of the Madras Government, Public Department,
3rd June 1875.*

I there suggested that the mongoose might be imported into districts infested by venomous snakes. The multiplication of the guinea-fowl throughout the country would also be of value, for they are bold birds, great wanderers, and would not leave a snake in their neighbourhood. Households should cease to put the guinea-fowl on the table and keep them solely for protection against snakes. With this object also ducks might be kept in the villagers' houses, and any destruction of the pea-fowl, whether by sportsmen or by the Bhoura, who snare wild game birds, might be discouraged.

From Major W. ROBERTSON, Assistant Inspector-General of Police, to Surgeon-General E. G. BALFOUR, Surgeon-General, Indian Medical Department, Fort St. George, dated Madras, 13th May 1875, No. 2415.

With reference to your docket memorandum, No. 6494, of 7th October 1874, I have the honor to forward a statement of précis of replies received from the Superintendents of Police to circular on the use of ammonia supplied to them for the treatment of cases of snake-bites.

Statement of District Reports on the use of Ammonia for the cure of Snake-bites.

District.	Number of Cases in which Ammonia was applied.	Number of successful Cases.	Number of unsuccessful Cases.	Remarks.
Ganjam ...	8	6	2	States that ammonia was used in eight cases in principal division, of which six were successfully treated; but in sub-divisions it was never used, as in most of the cases of snake-bite persons bitten were dead before the information could reach the Police.
Vizagapatam ...	...	...	...	States that ammonia has not been used in the district.
Jeypore ...	1	1	...	Reports that only one case of snake-bite by cobra took place, which was successfully treated by the administering of ammonia.
Godavery ...	34	32	2	States that none of the successful cases appears to have been by cobra-bites or snakes of a venomous kind. In two of cobra-bites ammonia was useless.
Krishna ...	7	7	...	States two of those bitten were said to have been bitten by a cobra. Reports people raise objection to the treatment by ammonia.
Nellore ...	17	14	3	Reports that in successful cases description of snakes is not known, and that in unsuccessful cases known to be cobras. Besides these there had been innumerable successful cases of scorpion sting in which liquor ammonia was administered.
Kurnool ...	39	35	4	States that full reliance cannot be placed on cobra-bites as the information obtained was only from patients. There had been many successful cases in which persons were stung by scorpions with the use of ammonia.
Bellary ...	3	3	...	Reports that there was very little chance of using ammonia in cases which occurred in villages other than those where the Police are stationed as reports to police stations were received too late to admit of remedies being tried.

*Proceedings of the Madras Government, Public Department,
3rd June 1875.*

Statement of District Reports on the use of Ammonia for the cure of Snake-bites—(Concluded.)

District.	Number of Cases in which Ammonia was applied.	Number of successful Cases.	Number of unsuccessful Cases.	Remarks.
Addapah ...	8	8	...	States that two of these were by cobras. The other cases are stated to have been by Penjeroo and Moonicontha Pamoo.
North Arcot ...	1	1	...	Inform only one case occurred. The patient was bitten on the foot, and the part bitten was scarified and ammonia was applied externally as well as internally. Six minutes after being bitten he became giddy, which continued till half an hour after application, and the next day he complained that his eyes were burning. It is not known by what snake bitten, but it was presumed that the snake was a harmless one.
Singleput ...	26	25	1	Nine of these cases appear to be by cobras and others were by Virian Kathri, &c. Liquor ammonia was invariably used in all of them.
South Arcot ...	12	12	...	None of these appears to be by cobras, but ammonia was used in all. Some of these cases were by Veelavirian, Panavirian, Koducathalay Virian, and in some cases the description of snakes is unknown.
Madjore ...	4	2	2	Reports that in these two cases the description of snakes was not found, but it is supposed that the snakes were not poisonous ones.
Madura ...	4	4	...	States that out of four cases of snake-bites in which ammonia was used one was ascertained to be by a cobra.
Madnevelly ...	3	3	...	Reports that all the three cases in which ammonia was administered in the Rathapooram Division were cured and in the remaining divisions ammonia was not made use of.
Madlem ...	7	7	...	Reports four divisions in the district used ammonia in seven cases; all of them were treated successfully.
Madimbatore ...	1	1	...	Reports that four other cases of scorpion sting, in which ammonia mixed with spae* was used, proved successful.
Malabar ...	2	...	2	States that ammonia was used in two cases, both of which proved successful.
Maduth Canara ...	4	4	...	Inform that in three of the four cases the description of snakes is unknown, and the remaining by a cobra.

* Ipecacuanha.

MADRAS,
8th May 1875.

(Signed) W. ROBERTSON,
Asst. Inspector-General of Police.

No. 17.

ORDER THEREON, 3rd June 1875, No. 745.

The Governor in Council authorizes the Police and Jail Departments, and all Collectors and Presidents of Municipal and Local Fund Boards, to include "ammonia" in their indents (for medicine on the Medical Stores) if required.

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*Proceedings of the Madras Government, Public Department,
3rd June 1875.*

2. The Surgeon-General's letter with its enclosures will be communicated to all departments for information, and placed on the Editors' Table.
(True Extract.)

Stan'hill

Officiating Chief Secretary.

To the Revenue Department. ✓
.. Military do.
.. Public Works do.
.. Inspector-General of Police.
.. do. of Jails.
.. Surgeon-General, Indian Medical Department.
To all Presidents of Municipalities.
.. do. of Local Fund Boards.

Exd. A. S. Rodgers,
ASL

Bobt. of 11875
Address.

PUBLIC.

To THE REVENUE DEPARTMENT,
&c., &c., &c.

Dated June, 3rd.

Issued - 22 2
Recd. - 22 5

G.O., 3rd June 1875, No. 745.

JUNE.
Nos. 16-17.

Medical.—The Police and Jail Department, and all Collectors and Presidents of Municipalities, if required in their indents for medicine to the Medical Stores.

June 13/75

26 June 75. All

7 Like Boarding Recd. 1 July

21.6.75