

Good Luck in Medicine

PARE'S USE OF COOLING CREAM

Pare believed that wounds had to be covered with boiling oil to stop infection. One day he ran out of oil and, in despair, used a cool mixture of eggs, oil of roses and turpentine. The next day he discovered that the patients he had treated with the cooling lotion had less pain and less infection in their wounds than those he had treated with the boiling oil.

JENNER, COWPOX AND SMALLPOX

Jenner worked in the countryside where it had been noticed that milkmaids did not seem to catch smallpox. They did catch cowpox, however. Most doctors would have dismissed the story as an old wives' tale but Jenner could not forget it. He gave a young boy cowpox and then tried to give him smallpox by putting infected matter into a scratch on his arm. The boy did not catch smallpox. When the Royal Society would not publish his findings, Jenner published a book of his own. Within a few years news of his discovery spread around the world.

1776 FOXGLOVES AND HEART DISEASE

A Birmingham doctor, William Withering, was told by an old lady that foxglove leaves could help people with dropsy (heart disease). He found that the method worked and told others. Digitalis is found in foxglove leaves and this is still used today in the treatment of heart disease.

1850 FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE VISITS GERMANY

Florence did not have to work. Her family was wealthy. In 1850 she visited a training school for nurses which Pastor Fliedner had set up at Kaiserwerth to train released female prisoners. It was this visit that convinced Florence that she should become a nurse.

CHICKEN CHOLERA ACCIDENT AND VACCINES

Pasteur was studying Chicken Cholera. One of his team injected chickens with germs from an old culture. The chickens did not die as they were expected to. The next day these chickens and some others were injected with strong germs. The chickens which had earlier received the weak germs lived while the others died. Pasteur soon used this method of injecting a weakened germ to protect animals against anthrax.

PASTEUR'S WORK INFLUENCES LISTER AND NEWS FROM CARLISLE HELPS HIM

Lister read Pasteur's work which suggested that organisms floating in the air caused problems with fermentation. He suspected that the high death rate of his surgical cases was caused by small microbes floating in the air. Pasteur had said that chemicals could be used to kill these tiny organisms. Lister had read that Carlisle had used carbolic acid at its sewage works to reduce the smell. He experimented successfully with carbolic acid during operations.

RONTGEN AND THE DISCOVERY OF X-RAYS

In 1895 Professor Rontgen was studying the effects of cathode rays. He noticed that a nearby piece of paper was glowing. It had been coated with barium platinocyanide. He saw that the rays would pass through a thousand page book but when he put his hand over the glowing

paper, the bones in his hand appeared as dark shadows. He experimented with photographic plates and found he could make a permanent record. He published a report of his findings. Just two months after the publication a surgeon in Liverpool used X-Rays to find an air gun pellet.

1928 FLEMING AND PENICILLIN

Fleming was growing and studying the staphylococcus bacteria when he noticed that a mould had contaminated a culture dish. The germs were not growing near the edges of the mould. He found that many other germs did not grow near the mould.

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