

## Original Communications.

## IODOFORM IN SOME PHASES OF SYPHILIS.

By J. H. DAVENPORT, M.D.

AMONG the numerous remedies with which chemistry has gifted modern medicine is iodoform. It is one of the handsomest of drugs, its shining crystalline scales resembling chloride of gold in color. It is soluble in alcohol, but insoluble in water and in glycerine; is slightly volatile, with a faint, sickish, saffron-like odor; and in this state of vapor is said to be anaesthetic, though inferior to chloroform. Speaking chemically, it is a triiodide of formyle [ $C^2 H I^3$ ], forming one of a complete series of chemical compounds, of which others, such as bromoform and chloroform, are used in medicine. They are all combinations of some compound radical, in this case formyle [ $C^2 H$ ], with three equivalents of an element such as bromine or iodine.

Iodoform contains twenty-nine parts in thirty of its weight of iodine. Hence the therapist would infer that wherever iodine was indicated iodoform would be of service, and experience proves the surmise to be not far from correct. Its action, however, differs from that of iodine in many important respects. It is not in the least irritant, whereas iodine is remarkably so. Like iodine, it is alterative, and like iodine, also, its action is speedy; but, perhaps, its most valuable property is its anodyne influence, often subduing the most violent and chronic neuralgias. Every physician knows how wide a field is open to an anodyne alterative; and iodoform has accordingly been tried in a great many diseases, and in many with eminent success. Ringer praises it in syphilis, in bedsores, and in neuralgia. Prof. Fordyce Barker, of New York, highly recommends it as a suppository in cancer of the womb, which it robs of its pains at the same time that it seems to delay the course of that malignant disease.

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Besides this, it has been used in chronic rheumatism and gout, in consumption, in scrofula, ophthalmia, in painful affections of the neck of the bladder and of the prostate, and in cancer of the rectum.

Iodoform is found in the shops as a light yellow powder of small, pearly crystallized scales. It is used both externally and internally; externally as an ointment:—*R.* Iodoform, grs. xxx.—lx.; simple cerate and lard, each one half oz. *M.* Or, better still, is simply dusted upon the surface and a rag smeared with cerate or a bit of lint dipped in glycerine placed above; internally, the best form of administration is in pills containing two or three grains each of iodoform. The power of iodoform is greatly enhanced by adding to these pills Vallex's iron, which is protected from combining with the iodine of the iodoform by the insolubility of the iodoform in water. These pills, if preferred, may be sugar-coated. The greatest objection to using iodoform at the present time is its expense, which is about a dollar an ounce, a price unwarranted by its simple and easy manufacture, and which can only be accounted for by the novelty of the drug.

Given in overdoses, iodoform causes, says Ringer, a species of intoxication, succeeded by convulsions, with tetanic spasms. It imparts its peculiar odor to the breath of the patient, a fact which the writer has often noticed on entering a room in which patients taking the drug have been lying.

In some of the manifestations of secondary syphilis, iodoform has, in the writer's hand, met with marked success, and below are adduced a few cases of ulcers and neuralgias, with a specific history, which have yielded to its influence, and often with surprising readiness. A few years ago there was no disease to which was assigned so certain and so uniform a treatment as the venereal. But late inquiries have shown that mercury is a remedy of as doubtful value in that as in the numerous other diseases for which it was so largely prescribed in the last generation, and medical practice has inclined more and more to the

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use of the compounds of iodine. The old mercurial sheet-anchor has been cut loose! The largest syphilitic hospital in New England to-day gives not a grain of calomel to its patients, and can still point to cures as numerous and as striking as before.

The following cases are those of some patients treated at the Deer Island Hospital, and illustrate the power of iodoform over secondary syphilitic ulcers, especially of the soft and fresh variety; and also in neuralgias of a syphilitic taint.

CASE I.—A. G., 25 years of age, terribly afflicted with syphilitic ulcers. In the latter part of June, 1870, he contracted a chancre on the penis, and about a month afterwards began to be troubled with pimples on the face and legs. I first saw him on April 8th, 1871. He then had by count sixty (60) ulcers on the legs and thirty on the arms and face, mostly of large size. On the nates were two sores, each four inches in diameter by measurement. One ulcer, on the right wrist, was two inches broad, and completely encircled it, save in one place for about half an inch. There were no tertiary symptoms, no nodes at the usual places, nor any pains at night. On entering the hospital, he was much emaciated and suffering from diarrhoea; was given chalk mixture for a few days, and then was treated as follows:—

R. Iodoform, gr. ij.;

Sulph. quinine, gr. i. M.

S. Take three times daily.

Also iodoform ointment (30 gr. to ℥i.) was applied to the sores. A marked improvement was almost immediately observed. Most of the smaller ulcers were healed in a few days and the larger ones grew rapidly less. They seemed to dry and skin over with the presence of a few granulations. In the large ulcers on the nates, islands of epidermal tissue formed in the midst of the sore, which seemed to stagger the ideas of pathology that had been instilled into me. The iodoform in this case acted so well that I was encouraged to try it in many other cases. The patient had no mercury or other treatment than that described, and was discharged from hospital, cured, on May 6th, 1871. This patient had been previously treated at the City Hospital with, as he described them, "bitter medicines."

CASE II.—P. R., 35 years old. Admitted on April 17th, with a large, oval syphilitic ulcer on the leg, about two inches in diameter. Was treated for two weeks, unsuccessfully, with various stimulant washes, lunar caustic, and with strapping. Then

prescribed iodoform, grains ij. in pill thrice a day, and iodoform ointment locally. A week later began to sprinkle on iodoform itself in powder. On May 17th patient was discharged, the ulcer being then but half an inch in diameter and doing well. Discharged because term of sentence (a prison patient) was out. The effect of the iodoform here was not as marked as in the previous case, as this was an old ulcer which had frequently been treated before and the man was broken down by intemperance.

CASE III.—M. J. A., 35 years old, much troubled with syphilitic neuralgia about the head and face, and with a bad corroding ulcer at the junction of the cheek with the right ala nasi, accompanied with deep lancinating pains, which resisted all ordinary treatment. Was given mercurials, corrosive sublimate dissolved in iodide of potassium, and iodide of potassium alone; also cod-liver oil and whiskey, iodide of potassium with bark, but all without much perceptible effect, the ulcer still continuing to increase. April 18th, began to give one grain of iodoform in pill three times a day, and iodoform ointment applied to the ulcer constantly.

April 20th.—Ulcer begins to look cleaner.

21st.—Much less pain. Iodoform increased to two grains, and shortly after this began to dust iodoform in powder upon the sore.

May 1st, the ulcer was practically cured, the pains having previously ceased. To-day the scar presents an excellent opportunity for a plastic operation to restore the lost portion of the ala nasi.

CASE IV.—H. F., 23 years old, afflicted with severe and protracted frontal neuralgia, was admitted to hospital on April 3d. Was treated ineffectually with iodide of potassium, long continued and pushed to large doses. Opiates were given without stint. Chloral would afford her sleep for a time, but she would soon wake up with renewed pain. Blisters on the neck would give partial relief for a day or so.

April 17th, began to give iodoform pills, one grain, thrice a day, with no other treatment.

April 24th.—Pain was much less and sleep better. Dose now increased to two grains thrice a day. Improvement constant until her discharge, on April 28th. This woman had a chancre two months previous, but no secondary symptoms had appeared.