

# A CASE OF EPITHELIOMA OF THE VULVA AND A CASE OF RECURRENT GROWTH OF THE MEATUS URINARIUS TREATED BY IONIC SUR- GERY AND PLASTIC OPERATIONS\*

G. BETTON MASSEY, M.D.

Attending Surgeon, American Oncologic Hospital  
PHILADELPHIA

The case of epithelioma of the vulva is reported as presenting somewhat unusual features, and also as illustrating one type of malignant growth for which the ionic method of destructive sterilization is peculiarly adapted. The permanence of the result attained is fairly assured by the fact that nearly two and a half years have passed since the operation was performed. The salient points of this case were as follows:

**Patient.**—Miss E. Z., aged 49, was referred to me by Dr. Marie Formad, of Philadelphia, June 16, 1908.

**History.**—Four years ago a lump the size of a pea appeared on the right labium majus; it increased in area and ulcerated. Two years ago, Dr. Formad sent her to a hospital where a microscopic examination was made and the case pronounced inoperable. During the past two years the increase in the area of the growth has been rapid.

**Examination.**—The condition on admission to the Oncologic Hospital was as follows: An eroded and proliferated surface extended from the clitoris to a point below the anus, involving the whole vulvar area and extending some distance into the urethra, vagina and rectum. There was a characteristic discharge accompanied by a foul odor. No enlarged glands were discoverable. The blood-examination showed erythrocytes, 5,550,000; leukocytes, 5,800, and hemoglobin, 81 per cent.

**Treatment.**—On June 24, 1908, the patient was placed under ether and a major monopolar application of zinc-mercury ions was made with a current of from 1,000 to 1,200 milliamperes for one hour. This application was accomplished by the ionic dissolution of sixteen zinc needles, each heavily coated with quicksilver and inserted in the periphery of the growth. The needles were connected with the positive pole of the direct current, the negative being a large kaolin pad under the patient's back. On separation of the large mass of sterilized tissue two weeks later an immense cloaca-like opening was revealed, into which the three pelvic outlets coalesced, the cavity extending so far on the right as to expose the lower edge of the pubic ramus. The wound was painless, and filled in rapidly. By August 18 the patient had regained partial control of both rectum and bladder.

**Subsequent History.**—Four months after the operation the floor of the pelvis had become partially replaced by healthy scar tissue, though this tissue was insufficient to prevent a protrusion of the vaginal and rectal walls, the prolapsed anterior vaginal wall containing a cystocele and giving marked discomfort when the patient sneezed or laughed. Dr. Longenecker, of the hospital staff, kindly did a plastic operation at this time on the anterior vaginal wall, with excellent results.

**Plastic Operation.**—Ten months after the ionic operation the cicatrization was still incomplete at a central point around the urethral opening, this opening existing at about the middle point of the normal urethral length, the external portion having been involved in the disease and destroyed at the operation. It was decided that a plastic operation for covering the bare area would be tried, and this was done by Dr. Hewson, April 18, 1909, a square flap of skin and subdermic tissue being dissected from the left side of the scar and side of the thigh and transferred to the freshened surface, an opening having been made in the middle of the flap to correspond with the urethra. A soft catheter was placed securely

in the partly artificial urethra thus made and kept in position for six days, leaving some vesical irritation.

**Result.**—At the present time, two years and five months since the ionic operation, there is no evidence of recurrence of the malignant growth, and the patient's only discomfort is due to the practical absence of the lower rectal sphincter, making it difficult to retain flatus, and permitting soiling of the clothing when the feces are unformed. The bladder retains some of the sensitiveness acquired at the time of the last plastic operation, and micturition is somewhat precipitant.

**Examination of Growth.**—A specimen of the tissue was removed just prior to the ionic operation and was reported on as follows by Dr. John M. Swan, the pathologist of the hospital:

"A piece of tissue from the vulva, submitted for examination: The specimen is composed of skin and subcutaneous tissue. The epidermis has grown down into the underlying connective tissues, where it forms irregular islands of epithelial cells surrounded by young connective tissue. The cells in the epithelial islands are squamous in type. There are no pearly bodies. Diagnosis: squamous-celled epithelioma of vulva."

The other case to which I invite attention is an illustration of the difficulties that sometimes surround the diagnosis of growths of the urethral orifice in women. The appearance presented by this growth when first seen was that of a typical caruncle, the bright red color of the round protuberance showing within the urethral orifice, and its exquisite tenderness, both indicating a benign neoplasm. Yet a measure of destructive sterilization adapted to such a diagnosis was followed by the recurrence of a distinctly malignant growth in the same situation a few months later. The successful destruction of this second manifestation of the growth by an ionic application fully adapted to the malignant conditions will illustrate also, I think, the value of this form of surgery in this situation, and the opportunity that it presents for conserving the unaffected urethral tissues.

**Patient.**—Miss F., aged 33, was referred to me by Dr. J. B. Shaw, of Trenton, N. J., May 12, 1909. Her father died of cancer of the liver, otherwise the family history was negative. During the past five years the patient had lost 35 pounds in weight, and for two years she had suffered from a burning sensation at the urethral opening, greatly aggravated by the passage of urine, and from a more constant soreness referred to the bladder, with considerable mucopurulent leukorrhea.

**Examination.**—The patient was rather thin and somewhat bronzed in color. Inspection revealed a bright red caruncle-like body the size of a pea projecting slightly from the meatus urinarius. It was smooth and excessively tender to the touch. On urethroscopic examination the caruncle could be traced as an elongation up the urethra about one inch, it being attached as a sessile growth to the right side of the urethral mucous membrane.

**Treatment.**—The patient was admitted to the Oncologic Hospital and placed under ether for ionic destruction of the growth May 13, 1909. After etherization, a specimen was removed for microscopic examination; this caused free hemorrhage, which was quickly arrested by placing a zinc-mercury needle in the wound and turning on from 30 to 40 milliamperes of the direct current, positive. The hemorrhage being controlled, another positive zinc-mercury needle was thrust into the base of the growth, and, with both needles active, the current was raised to 80 milliamperes and maintained at this strength until the whole of the growth appeared to be devitalized and white, the total duration of the application being sixteen minutes.

**Result.**—The patient required catheterizing for twenty-four hours, after which time urine was voided. There was no rise of temperature. The small slough separated one week later, and the patient was discharged from the hospital at the end of two weeks.

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**Examination of Growth.**—The specimens removed were submitted to Dr. Swan, who made the following uncertain report, the cause of the uncertainty possibly being the failure to secure a portion of the base of the growth.

**Pathologic Report on First Specimen.**—"A few fragments of tissue removed from the external urinary meatus. The tissue is composed of a surface epithelium of the stratified squamous type lying on a connective tissue groundwork. The majority of the sections are of such a nature that no opinion can be given as to their character, but in one slide the connective tissue portion of the specimen is composed of a loose reticulum of cells of varying type mixed with an extensive exudate of red blood-corpuscles. Many of the cells, I believe, are epithelial cells, and I think the tumor is malignant, but I am not prepared to give an opinion as to its proper classification. Diagnosis: questionable."

**Subsequent History.**—The patient was kept under close observation, and seven months later (Dec. 13, 1909), there was distinct evidence of a recurrence of the growth in the shape of an ulceration at its site with raised, hard edges that refused to heal. She was readmitted to the hospital under the belief that the growth was originally and still malignant, with a view to its thorough destruction. On this occasion a current of 200 to 300 milliamperes was employed for double the previous time, or thirty-four minutes, and with six larger needles completely circling the growth at its base. Both operations were monopolar, that is, the negative pole was a large kaolin pad beneath the patient's back. Special efforts were made at this second operation to reach the highest point of the growth in the urethra with as little loss of muscular tissue as possible.

**Pathologic Report on Second Specimen.**—The pathologic report on the specimen removed at this time is as follows: "Three fragments of tissue removed near the orifice of the urethra, submitted for examination. The largest of these fragments is composed of very much hypertrophied squamous epithelium, which is in one place thrown into numerous folds so that it resembles the duct of a gland. Many of the cells of this epithelium are hydropic. No place can be found in which this epithelium extends into the underlying connective tissue, but the connective tissue just beneath it is the seat of a very well-marked round-celled infiltration, and these cells are principally of the plasma-cell type. The tissue is markedly congested, and in some places there is free hemorrhage. The round-celled infiltration above referred to is seen in scattered areas throughout the connective tissue, here and there associated with polymorphonuclear cells. There are a great many new blood-vessels in the tissue. One of the smaller bits is elliptical in outline, surrounded throughout its entire extent with a stratified squamous epithelium which does not dip down into the underlying connective tissue. This connective tissue is rich in blood-vessels, which are filled with blood, and shows numerous fibroblasts, and areas of small round-celled infiltration of the plasma cell type, mixed with lymphocytes. The third piece is composed of masses of round cells of varying type; polymorphonuclears, lymphocytes, plasma cells and fragmented nuclei. The tissue contains numerous blood-vessels with fairly thick walls. In several places there is free hemorrhage. In one part of this piece the endothelial cells forming the walls of the blood-vessels appear to be proliferating. Diagnosis: infective granuloma (?)."

**Third Operation.**—On Feb. 24, 1910, the patient was admitted a third time for the destruction of three nodules of bright color at the meatus. A current of from 100 to 150 milliamperes was used for twelve minutes, with three needles.

**Result.**—Her progress thereafter was steady, the parts closing in with tissue of normal color, somewhat retracted, but with complete control of the bladder and absence of unpleasant sensations, except a hypogastric discomfort for a time, apparently referable to the bladder. At present, ten months after the last operation, there is smooth scar tissue occupying the whole site of the growth, the external layer being regenerated mucous membrane by peripheral budding. The urethra seems healthy and of normal caliber, with the meatus retracted about one inch. This retraction has tilted the anterior

wall of the vagina outward at the urethral orifice. The patient's unpleasant sensations on micturition have ceased and she has good control over the bladder. No evidence of a return of the disease can be found, and she has gained in weight and color.

903 Professional Building.

## EARLY DIAGNOSIS OF GALL-STONE DISEASE

C. C. COLEMAN, M.D.

Instructor in Principles of Surgery and Clinical Surgery in the Medical College of Virginia

RICHMOND, VA.

The success of surgery of the bile-tract within the last ten years is due to more effective cooperation between the surgeon and the general practitioner, to closer observation of pathology, and to the contributions of experimental medicine. The opportunity of the surgeon to study pathology at the operating-table has brought about a clearer understanding of the significance of symptoms which heretofore have not been appreciated. The great work done by the Mayos and their associates, by Deaver, Moynihan and others, in calling attention to pathologic conditions found in the living has revolutionized our former conception of gall-stone disease. We now know that gall-stones, instead of being frequently present without symptoms, create a distinct type of clinical phenomena, which in the past we did not properly interpret. The picture of the terminal stage has been too frequently used for a general description of gall-stone disease.

The close association of the organs of the upper abdomen often causes diseases of any of these organs to find expression in the stomach. To assign these stomach symptoms to their real cause requires careful study. Except in ulcer or cancer, the stomach is seldom the seat of primary trouble, though it may be the agent through which distress in many abdominal organs may manifest itself.

The classical picture of gall-stone disease, accompanied by attacks of severe pain radiating to the right shoulder, nausea, vomiting and jaundice, is a late stage and results from complications that a calculous cholecystitis may cause. It is most unfortunate that these symptoms are still regarded by many as necessary to a diagnosis, thereby delaying proper treatment and prolonging disability. To prevent complications such as adhesions, perforation, obstruction of the common duct and chronic pancreatitis, it is necessary to recognize what Moynihan calls the "inaugural symptoms" of gall-stone disease, and to dismiss from our minds the typical text-book description of gall-stone colic.

Disease of the gall-bladder has its own type of digestive disturbance. According to Graham, we may distinguish four stages in its development and symptomatology.

In the first stage we see mild disturbance of the stomach, which occasions little distress to patients or anxiety to the physician. Irregular attacks of indigestion accompanied by gas formation and a feeling of epigastric constriction or tightness are observed. These discomforts are sudden in their onset and are frequently accompanied by chilliness, belching, regurgitation, or vomiting. Such dyspeptic attacks, sudden, irregular and mild, are as characteristic of early gall-bladder disease, as the typical attacks of gall-stone colic, which may ensue unless the trouble is recognized and proper treatment instituted.