

AN

INAUGURAL DISSERTATION,

ON

Milk Sickness

SUBMITTED TO THE

PRESIDENT, BOARD OF TRUSTEES, AND MEDICAL FACULTY

OF THE

University of Nashville,

FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF MEDICINE.

BY

George A. Rush

OF

North Carolina

1876

CHARLES W. SMITH,

BOOKSELLER AND STATIONER,

NASHVILLE, TENN.

Milk Sickness

This peculiar and hor-
rible endemic disease, which prevails,
in some of the middle and western
States, made its appearance in the
extreme western part of North Carolina,
about the year 1830. From that time,
up to the present, the disease has been
rapidly increasing. The localities in
which, the disease generally prevails,
are broken, much diversified with hills,
mountains, and valleys.

Symptoms. There are two forms
of this disease, the acute and chronic,
They are however, the same disease,
produced by the same cause, and differ-
ing only in degree. In the chronic
form of this disease, the individual
is languid, unable to make much

inertion, impaired appetite, torpid bowels, palpitation of the heart, soreness and stiffness of the limbs, trembling nausea, and syncope if any considerable exertion is made. ^{if} The pulse varies considerably in the disease, though generally slower than natural. ^{if} The individual may linger a long, in this form of the disease, (Chronic) for weeks or months, but unless removed by the sanative powers of nature or some other remedial means, the disease will assume the acute form. Acute form. - ^{if} The individual is suddenly seized with extreme nausea, protracted vomiting, syncope, and great prostration. ^{if} The temperature of the body and extremities, are now greatly reduced, the skin cold and clammy, great distress and anxiety.

ity are depicted upon the countenance of the individual; the breath acquires a peculiar fetor, the tongue generally swollen and coated with yellow or dark fur. A complete retroverted action of the stomach ensues, and at every effort of vomiting, a fluid is ejected of a green or dark colour. The eyes have a greenish colour, pupils dilated, dimness of vision, intolerance of light, and giddiness. The bowels are always obstinately constipated, and when the discharges are obtained, they are very dark, and so offensive, that it is almost impossible for any one to remain in ^{the} room with the patient. The pulse is slow and easily compressed. Delirium and tinnitus aurium are present in this stage.

but most commonly confined to children.
The peculiar fetor of the breath is pres-
ent throughout the whole course of the
disease. As the disease advances, the
patient complains of acute gastric
pains and intense sense of heat or burn-
ing in the stomach, oesophagus, and fauces,
causing him to call out, every few minu-
its, loudly for cold water to allay the
burning sensation. The pulse now
increases in frequency, but is still easily
compressed. The extremities and body
are bathed in a cold and clammy sweat,
the eyes are half closed, vomiting so violent
that every article of diet, drink, or
medicine is immediately ejected.

During the intervals of vomiting, the
patient lies on his back, tossing his

ints. of the infected localities have suf-
fered greatly from its poisonous influ-
ence. However, they did not suffer as
much from it, when it first visited
the country, as they do at the present
time. When it first visited the coun-
try, it was supposed by some to be a
kind of malarial Fever, while others
considered it to be a species of congestive
Fever. At the present day, it is
considered, by some, to be a species
of typhoid Fever. Observations have
proven to me, that it is neither ma-
larial, congestive, nor typhoid Fever,
but that it is a peculiar disease
caused by some unknown poison
taken in the system.

Wherever this disease prevails in

the human species, the lower animals, that feed upon vegetation, are liable to a peculiar and fatal disease, called Trembles, and that, in the human species, the origin of the disease is in some specific poison, obtained, universally, from the milk, butter, cheese, and flesh of animals that feed in these infected localities, producing the disease (Trembles)

What is the local cause or specific virus, that invades these localities, producing the disease, we know but little, There are no two, who have attempted to investigate this subject, agree I believe, that all agree that the disease, in the human species, is caused by eating the milk, butter, and flesh &c.

of animals affected with the poison
There are various notions about the
direct cause of this fatal disease.

Some attributed the infection of the
Cattle to their having eating of some
species of *Rhus*, or a peculiar fungus,
as the mushroom or something of that
kind. Others contend that it is caused
by the water that the Cattle ^{drink}, but
this is not true, from the fact, that it
appears, in localities, where there is
no water, and moreover, water, in which
the poisoned flesh was boiled, remains
entirely unaffected, while the meat
still retains its poisonous properties;
this proves clearly, to everyone, that
the poison is not soluble in water

From my own observations, I think
that it is of a mineral origin, existing
in the soil. Accounts conflict, as each
observer judges from the prominent
features of his own locality, which
may differ in some respect from that
of another. The disease makes its ap-
pearance in certain kinds of soils, and
cultivation does not destroy the pois-
on. The cause, whatever it is, affects
the cattle grazing at night, and in the
morning, while the dew is on, during
the day, there is no danger of the
the cattle being affected with the
virus. Those animals, that have been
gradually accustomed ^{to} the range or
pasture of affected districts, suffer as
much as others unaccustomed to it

Cows exposed to the poison during lactation, generally escape, while their offspring die.

While grazing and browsing animals, only, are affected by the original cause, their flesh will reproduce it in all animals. Carnivorous animals never have the disease, only after preying upon the carcasses of herbivorous animals, that have died of the complaint. Those persons, that have been affected, once by the disease, are more liable to be affected again, than others. If an individual has the disease once, he never will get ~~it~~ fresh over it. He may be able to do common labour, but if he overheats himself, he will feel it sensibly—

~~of the disease and its duration~~
The disease does not prevail in the winter and spring. I never have seen a case sooner in the year, than the twentieth of June, & it prevails mostly in the fall, September, October, and November.

Mortality, prognosis &c. The mortality is variously stated, some say three out of every six, or one half. Others five out of six &c. I have been practicing, in the infected localities, four years, and have treated a great many cases of Milk Sickness, with good success. I never have lost a case of Milk Sickness in all my practice, and I have more or less cases ever of all

Of the anatomical characters, I know nothing as I never have had an opportunity to make a post mortem examination. When the disease is overcome by remedial agent, the heart begins to return to its natural pulsation.

The irritability of the stomach subsides gradually, and the vermicular motions of the intestines can be perceived; the skin and extremities take on their natural heat.

^{of} Treatment. The prominent indications in the treatment of Milk sickness, are to remove constipation, to allay gastric irritation, and to counteract debility and exhaustion. Bloodletting and emetics do harm. in this disease. Consequently, they should never be used.

Constipation must be removed by active
Cathartics and stimulating injections
Stimulants must be given freely, as
soon as the constipation is removed, and
before, if the patient is bad.

Peach Brandy and Carbonate of ammonia
are the best stimulants for the disease
I generally take a pint of peach brandy
and 100 grains of Carbonate of ammonia
and a gill of ^{water} Cold, and put them into bottle
and sweeten it with honey, and make the
patient drink it all in twelve or twenty
four, as the case may require

The bottle must be shaken (always)
before taken it, Three grains of blue
mass should be given every night or two

The bowels must be acted on everyday by
Caster oil, Large blisters should be applied early
in the disease (upon the stomach)