

**A PRACTITIONER'S HANDBOOK OF
MATERIA MEDICA AND THERAPEUTICS:
BASED UPON ESTABLISHED
PHYSIOLOGICAL ACTIONS AND THE
INDICATIONS IN SMALL DOSES**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649060795

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Physiological Actions and the Indications in Small Doses by Thos. S. Blair

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Cover @ 2017

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THOS. S. BLAIR

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A Practitioner's Handbook
OF
MATERIA MEDICA AND THERAPEUTICS

BASED UPON ESTABLISHED PHYSIOLOGICAL ACTIONS
AND
The Indications in Small Doses.

TO WHICH IS ADDED
Some Pharmaceutical Data
AND
THE MOST IMPORTANT THERAPEUTIC DEVELOPMENTS
OF SECTARIAN MEDICINE AS EXPLAINED
ALONG RATIONAL LINES.

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Published by
THE MEDICAL COUNCIL,
4165 Walnut Street, Philadelphia, Pa.

[1907.]

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SCHOOL OF MEDICINE AND PUBLIC HEALTH
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Gift Mrs. R.W. Wilson
27 FEB 1937

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TO
THE OPTIMIST IN THERAPEUTICS
BY
THE AUTHOR

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PREFACE.

The modern tendency towards more direct and less bulky medication has placed in a transition stage the drug therapy of to-day. New synthetics, elegant pharmaceuticals, and mixtures and compounds more or less ethical, are being introduced faster than the profession can keep pace with them.

Certain excesses always accompany a forward movement. This little book is an exhortation to pause and consider, and is an attempted rational restudy of the *materia medica* with the two main points in view of emphasizing what is really important as regards the employment of drugs in their *larger* dose, and, more especially, of directing scientific and clinical attention to the employment of drugs to meet their indications in *small* doses.

Attempting to exploit no pathy, ism, or fanciful theories, the effort is made to gather together what is of practical account in the recorded investigations of all schools of practice bearing upon the clinical use of small doses of the drugs suitable for such employment. The infinitesimal dose will not be considered, and the theories involved concerning such attempts at medication need be but slightly touched upon.

The neglect of this subject by laboratory investigators, most of our clinical teachers and our physiologists, makes it imperative to draw considerably upon the mass of more or less valuable sectarian literature. This has been done in as nearly a judicial spirit as possible. There are so many instances where all three schools of medicine substantially agree upon the indications that the task is not so difficult as might appear upon the surface. Where such an agreement is not obvious, divergent views will be carefully weighed, and whatever data appears to possess the most substantial chemic, physiologic, and clinical foundation will be given preference over anything of a theoretic nature.

This is a series of studies, and is not a treatise; a volume of suggestions, and not one of principles. It presupposes a knowledge of the established *materia medica* and rational therapeutics, and presents from the standpoint of a seasoned "regular" what he apprehends we and all physicians, regardless of school, are coming to recognize and practice as common ground.

Full of imperfections a study of this nature must necessarily be. So much data is empiric; so much is based upon clinical observations and provings with too much of the subjective; some is contradictory, and much more is inadequate; but the refinements of physical and physiologic science are having their effects upon therapeutics.

In the *Materia Medica* section, the author accepts conditions as he finds them, and must, perforce of circumstances, give a sectarian setting to what he is endeavoring to give in a non-sectarian spirit. Pharmaceutic matters are considered impartially and as having no legitimate sectarian phases.

Most of the literature upon the small dose in therapeutics is built up upon that which has preceded it. The fathers of medicine dwelt much upon this problem. It has been quite impossible to determine the real author of much of the data used in the preparation of this volume. Many books, both regular and sectarian, have been consulted, and the author acknowledges a large debt of obligation.

Harrisburg, Pa., January, 1907.

INTRODUCTION.

The employment of drugs in ordinary or in large doses for their physical, chemic, or physiologic action is a procedure so well established in therapeutics, and so well borne out in the common experience of all ages, that a defence of such a rational use of remedies is not necessary.

The question of the natural limitations of such a line of therapy is a pertinent one, however. From time to time new theories have arisen, tending either to limit or to eliminate such a use of drugs. These theories or systems of therapeutics usually possess some degree of truth and one-sided merit, but they unite in a superlative elaboration of the symptomatology of disease processes as a guide in the selection of the indicated remedy, and they minimize the known physiologic actions as an indication towards the selection of the proper drug to meet the pathologic change underlying the symptomatology. Like the systems and theories of other branches of science, these well-meant efforts need not meet with pedantic condemnation, especially since certain abuses and overstatements have been corrected and our therapeutics tempered by reason of the discussions engendered by them.

What, then, are the limitations naturally surrounding our use of remedies in the usual doses of the books and for their generally recognized physiologic actions?*

First, as regards the mechanical action of remedies little need be said, since there is substantial agreement as to such indications. The wonderful advances in surgery and mechano-therapy have rendered unnecessary many of the old procedures, and advances in drug therapy have largely eliminated mechanical emesis, bulky protective agents, demulcents, escharotics, and diluents.

Chemically considered, a wide field is opening up. The physiologic chemist has pointed the way to much of therapeutic value. Antacids, antilithics, and the oxidizing agents constitute

* The question of the natural limitations of the *small* dose is quite as important as is that of the large dose. It is to be hoped that all physicians who employ remedies for their actions in small doses may never be so attracted by the arguments in favor of such procedures as to neglect the rational and eminently necessary use of the large doses when they are indicated.

In view of the distressing emergencies confronting the practitioner so frequently and because of the marked atonic character, or the malignancy of many cases of illness, it would be folly to *uniformly* depend upon small doses.