
"No one, however phlegmatic, can contemplate the prospect of an operation without some nervousness or apprehension... The anaesthetist, too, is grateful, for a placid patient usually means a smooth induction of anaesthesia. This is not the only benefit of premedication from the anaesthetist's point of view; secretions which may cause respiratory obstruction during anaesthesia are obviated... It is important that the drugs chosen should be related to the type of anaesthesia to be used... Patients can be conveniently divided into four broad groups. At the pre-operative visit the anaesthetist should decide to which group the patient belongs. These groups are: (1) The average fit adult from 16 to 60 years; (2) Ill or shocked patients; (3) Children; (4) The aged...

"For the average adult a barbiturate such as barbitone sodium (Medinal) gr. 5 to 10 or pentobarbitone sodium (Nembutal) gr. 1 1/2 to 3 will be found satisfactory. Effective control of secretions can be obtained with either atropine gr. 1/400 (0.6 mg.) or hyoscine gr. 1/450 (0.4 mg.). Either of these is combined with morphine or papaveretum, hyoscine being used when much sedation is required. Adequate sedation is provided by morphine gr. 1/6-1/4 (10-16 mg.), or papaveretum gr. 1/4 (20 mg.), given 1 to 1 1/2 hours before operation... [For] ill or shocked patients, unless pain or anxiety is a predominant feature, morphine may be omitted altogether... The extremes of life, it is often said, tolerate morphine badly. Though this may possibly be true of the aged, the young stand morphine well... As Professor Macintosh, of Oxford, has pointed out, morphine in a dose of 3/40 gr. per stone (2.5 mg. per 10 kg.) body weight will produce the same excellent results in children as it does in adults... Atropine is the drug of choice for efficient drying of secretions in children...

"Though the barbiturates are probably the most popular drugs for premedication in children they are not without their disadvantages. There may be occasional difficulty in persuading a child to swallow the capsule, even when its contents are embedded in jam. The unpredictable rate of absorption from the alimentary tract may produce very variable results. In addition, the absence of accompanying analgesia to dull postoperative pain may make the child restless to an uncontrollable degree during the recovery period. To minimise postoperative restlessness a short-acting drug such as Seconal should be used... Thiopentone (Pentothal) given per rectum is also used to produce preoperative sedation... Generally speaking, old people view life philosophically so that heavy sedation is neither necessary nor desirable. In addition, their metabolic rate is markedly slowed, and the dose of sedative to be given should therefore be not more than 1/2 to 3/5 of that required by a younger adult of equal health. Atropine is advocated rather than hyoscine, the latter often producing euphoria and delirium in the elderly... Nitrous oxide and oxygen anaesthesia by itself given in the dental surgery or casualty department is sometimes trying for both anaesthetist and surgeon, because of the narrow margin between the reflex movements of light anaesthesia and the jaetitations of dangerous anoxia. Anaesthesia for these cases can be made more efficient and smoother by suitable premedication... In all cases where a hypnotic or narcotic is given the patient must be accompanied both to and from the surgery and must be warned not to drive a car."

A. A.