PERCAINE AS SPINAL ANÆSTHETIC.

By MAJOR G. G. COLLET,
Royal Army Medical Corps.

The particulars of a case of spinal anaesthesia in which the anaesthetic used was percaine may be of interest. This drug seems to be a great advance on stovaine. The case for operation was a recurrent inguinal hernia, and the civilian surgical specialist, Dr. E. V. Lockett, asked my permission to use the new method of anaesthesia. Dr. Gray, the Government Pathologist of Jamaica, gave the injection.

No special preparation was given to the patient; 12 cubic centimetres of 1 in 1,500 percaine in 0·5 per cent NaCl solution of 1003 specific gravity was used and injected between the second and third lumbar vertebrae.

The patient’s blood-pressure was taken before the operation and found to be 68/130 mm. Hg. After the lumbar puncture an injection of 1½ grains of ephedrine was given subcutaneously; this was given to keep the blood-pressure up; the blood-pressure rose to 74/142 after the operation, i.e., after three quarters of an hour.

After the lumbar puncture the patient lay on his face five minutes, and then was turned on his back and placed in the Trendelenburg position of 10° to 15°; this is necessary because the specific gravity of percaine is lower than that of the cerebrospinal fluid, and this position prevents the anaesthetic rising to a dangerous high level. In the case of stovaine, whose specific gravity is higher than that of the cerebrospinal fluid, the patient’s head and shoulders have to be raised.

In about ten minutes complete anaesthesia and relaxation were obtained up to the nipple line. The patient felt perfectly well during the operation and the relaxation of muscles was complete. Muscular power and sensation were gradually regained two to three hours after the operation.

The patient complained of pain in the upper abdomen six hours after the operation; I attribute this pain to the anaesthetic as it was analogous to the severe pain so often experienced after the use of stovaine. The pain disappeared immediately after the injection of ¼ grain of morphia and apart from this he had no untoward symptoms of any kind.

I should like to hear of more cases of this form of anaesthesia, as if successful it seems to have great possibilities, especially in the tropics.