CLAMP METHOD TO OBTAIN CUTANEOUS LYMPH IN THE DIAGNOSIS OF LEPROSY.

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During research work conducted in Colombia in the early part of 1939 I had an opportunity of examining the Lleras method of obtaining skin lymph for the detection of Hansen bacilli. My Colombian colleagues used the common clamp of Pean to produce ischaemia of the affected part, thereafter obtaining lymph by a single puncture of the lesion.

Returning to Brazil I introduced the Lleras method with certain modifications. I. The area of skin to be examined is, after sterilisation, gripped up with a haemostatic clamp of Pean (See fig. I. Ref. fig. 2538 Catalogue Jetter and Scheerer). The blades are tightened till the first, second or third tooth of the handle is engaged according to the thickness of the skin. 2. The area of skin thus clamped, say 5 cms. long, becomes quite ischemic within a minute. It is then punctured deeply at four separate points with a large needle. 3. Four drops of clear lymph exuded from the sub-corium are collected each with a vaccination pen and smeared separately on a new and well cleaned slide. The slide requires a few hours to dry and is best covered with a Petri dish to avoid contamination from the air. 4. The slide is then stained by the usual Ziehl Neelsen method.

This modication of the Lleras method by eliciting four samples of material, proportionately increases the chances of finding bacilli as compared with single smear scraping methods.

When the lesion to be examined is situated in a region of the body characterised by dense subcutaneous tissue, e.g. the back, buttocks, etc., the technique is modified by using two clamps.

Where the lymph is obtained from a diffuse lepromatous lesion, the quantity of acid fast bacilli found in each microscopic field is enormous. Further, these bacilli stand out conspicuously owing

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to the absence of tissue elements such as are found in scrapings. It is suggested that this may be the method of choice for the detection of bacilli in tuberculoid or incharacteristic lesions. In my experience, bacilli may be found in all cases of tuberculoid leprosy even in some cases in bundles or globi by this method, athough such bacilli may not be demonstrable in ordinary histopathological sections.

The Lleras technique is an excellent method for the examination of institution cases for parole and in general in the control of treatment.