

MUSSEY (J. H.)

Note on pernicious anemia and
chlorosis in the negro.

2



Presented by the author

NOTE ON PERNICIOUS ANEMIA AND CHLOROSIS
IN THE NEGRO. ✓

BY J. H. MUSSER, M.D.,

Assistant Professor of Clinical Medicine, University of Pennsylvania.

AS FAR as the writer's knowledge goes, cases of the above diseases in the black race have not thus far been reported. On account of their rarity, therefore, the following notes are presented :

Case of Pernicious Anemia in the Negro.—E. D., aged 50, a widow, cook by occupation, black, was admitted to the medical wards of the Presbyterian Hospital, October 10, 1891. Her habits, as far as could be ascertained, had been good, and no cause could be found for her anemia. Her mother died of dropsy, and her father of an alleged slow poison, said to be due to work in chemicals. One sister died of cancer, another of phthisis, and a brother of acute intestinal disorder.

The patient has had the usual children's diseases and varioloid. At the age of 18 she had an attack of inflammatory rheumatism, and since then she has had three attacks at long intervals. She says she had malaria very severely during the past nine years. She had nine children in twelve years, and the menopause took place fifteen years ago.

The patient has been feeling badly for a year. Her symptoms occurred at irregular intervals in exacerbations; shortness of breath, attacks of nausea and vomiting, neuralgic pains in the legs, and headache, were the most prominent. Her feet would swell, but the swelling would disappear on treatment.

On examination the patient was much older in appearance than the age given. There is not much loss of flesh. Her teeth were poor; the mucous membranes of the tongue and mouth particularly pale; the sclerotics were very white, and conjunctivæ extremely pallid. She suffers from extreme weakness and shortness of breath, on account of which she is in bed most of the time. The anemia and apparent causelessness of her disability led to careful examination of the abdominal organs, with the following results: The liver was of the normal size; the abdomen slightly distended; the functions of the gastro-intestinal tract appeared to be good. There was no evidence of any organic disease. The aorta pulsated very much, and was the cause of considerable distress. Indeed, the pulsation, and bruit with pain, caused one to suspect the presence of an aneurism. Examination of the lungs did not reveal anything of note. The apex of the heart was seen in the fifth interspace; the impulse was diffused and strong. The upper



border of cardiac dulness began at third interspace, and the left border, in midclavicular line, fifth interspace. At the apex a loud systolic murmur was heard, transmitted into the axilla, and a faint murmur was heard at the second costal cartilage on the right, conducted into the carotids. A loud murmur was heard in the vessels of the neck. Carotid pulsation was marked; the jugular veins were not full. Patient remained in the hospital, growing weaker and weaker. On account of extra pressure of work, from a prevailing epidemic, the blood was not studied as it should have been. The count of the r. b. c. showed reduction of the same to 1,600,000, and several examinations for hemoglobin showed an average of 16 per cent. Death took place gradually from asthenia, during the term of service of my friend, Dr. Woods, to whom I am indebted for the privilege of reporting the case.

The autopsy was made by the pathologist, Dr. Griffith. There was entire absence of organic disease in all the organs examined; the tissues and fat were like those of pernicious anemia. The heart was markedly fatty, and showed the tabby-cat striation very distinctly. The marrow of the bones was very red. The liver and kidneys contained an excess of iron. Further report of the pathological features of the case will be made by Dr. Griffith.¹

Case of Chlorosis in a Mulatto.—The patient was a young girl, aged 22, who had suffered for six months with all the severe symptoms of chlorosis, of which gastralgia, persistent throbbing headache, with palpitation and pulsation of the vessels, were the most marked. The symptoms were so striking that they led to an examination of the blood. Such examination showed the presence in a high degree of the changes found in chlorosis. The use of Blaud's pills, as commonly advised in this affection, proved most satisfactory, and in a short time all the symptoms, for which the patient had been treated a long while, disappeared.

¹ See Trans. Col. of Phys., 1891.



