

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

A SIMPLE TECHNIQUE TO STOP HICCUPS

Sir,

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Hiccup is an intermittent clonic spasm of the diaphragm and associated with closure of the glottis. Apart from post-operative hiccups and those of organic origin, reflex hiccups are distressing in day to day life.

Several anesthetic, surgical and medical techniques have been described for the treatment of intractable hiccups (1, 3, 4). Many simple techniques have been followed with variable success. Holding the breath and closing the nose and mouth has been a time honoured practice. Based on this method continuous positive airway pressure technique has been tried and reported to be successful in post-operative hiccups by Saitto *et al.* (loc cit) in all cases. Instillation of ether into the nasopharynx through a catheter has been reported to be very effective for hiccups during endotracheal anaesthesia by Ravindran (2). Other simple techniques which have been practised are :

- Administration of a teaspoonful of granular sugar with vinegar.
- Rebreathing into a bag.
- Pharyngeal stimulation by catheter.
- Taking charcoal tablets.
- Fright.
- Thinking of some dear one remembering you.

Dr. Janet Travel physician to President Kennedy had earned reputation for stopping hiccups by yanking painfully and forcefully on the tongue and inhalation of noxious agents like ammonia (Quoted from Nathan loc cit).

The present technique has been applied in 200 healthy individuals (including children) and has been successful in 90% of the subjects.

The present technique consists of pinching firmly the skin of the upper half of the back of the neck on either side of the midline with both the hands. The procedure has met

with 90% success in "non-organic" hiccups. The technique is based on the principle of competitive inhibition, since pinching the dermatomal areas supplied by C3 and C4 (mainly C4) stimulates pain receptors. The pain reflex being a prepotent one competes with and inhibits the hiccup reflex.

The application of this simple technique may be worthwhile extending to certain cases of organic hiccups.

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