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NEW ZEALAND.

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# SMALLPOX ON H.M.N.Z. TRANSPORT "WILLOCHRA"

(REPORT ON THE OUTBREAK OF).

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*Laid on the Table of the House of Representatives by Leave.*

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Department of Public Health, Hospitals, and Charitable Aid,  
Wellington, N.Z., 1st August, 1916.

Memorandum for the Hon. the Minister of Public Health.

## SMALLPOX AND VACCINATION.

I HAVE the honour to submit the following short report by the District Health Officer, Dunedin, with regard to the outbreak of smallpox on H.M. transport "Willochra," which arrived at Port Chalmers on the 13th May.

In addition to the case of smallpox reported by wireless, another case of that disease was discovered by the Port Health Officer on arrival of the vessel at Port Chalmers. The vessel was accordingly placed in quarantine, and the men sent to the Quarantine Island, where they were detained for sixteen days. Before leaving the vessel all persons on board who did not show evidence of recent successful vaccination were vaccinated. Two cases of the disease subsequently developed on the Island, and of the total of four cases two proved fatal.

The District Health Officer's report is interesting as again exemplifying the protection afforded by vaccination. When it is considered that there were 303 persons on board the "Willochra," many of whom had never been vaccinated or only been vaccinated in infancy, and, further, that the means of isolation on board the vessel were by no means satisfactory, the protection afforded by vaccination is very striking. It is on this account that I specially draw your attention to this report in the hope that it may induce parents and guardians who have hitherto neglected to have their children vaccinated to take this the only known means of protection against a grave and horrible disease, as may be gathered from the photographs of the cases forwarded me by Corporal A. A. Gower, of Wanganui. The latest returns show that not 1 per cent. of the children born in the Dominion have been vaccinated.

T. H. A. VALINTINE.  
Chief Health Officer.

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District Health Office, Dunedin, 17th July, 1916.

Memorandum for the Chief Health Officer, Wellington.

## VACCINATION AS A PROTECTION AGAINST SMALLPOX.

The recent outbreak of smallpox on the "Willochra" again serves to illustrate very clearly the efficacy of successful vaccination in protecting the individual against a most dreadful and loathsome disease. While the smallpox in the Maori epidemic of 1912 was comparatively mild and innocuous, in this latter manifestation it had reverted to the type which long ago caused it to be regarded as one of the scourges of mankind. Out of a total of four cases from the "Willochra" two died, while a third was critically ill for several weeks, and then made a slow and tedious convalescence. These three cases were all of the type known as "confluent," and were characterized by a very extensive skin-eruption and a profound toxæmia. None of them has been successfully vaccinated at any time, either in childhood or in adult life, consequently the disease ran its ordinary severe course uninfluenced in any way.

The fourth case which shows up in marked contrast to the three just mentioned was that of a man aged thirty, who had been successfully vaccinated as a child. He had a very mild attack of "discrete" smallpox, the skin-eruption was not extensive, and his symptoms were few. He was feverish for only three days, and thereafter entered on his stage of convalescence, making a rapid and uneventful recovery. Here the effect of the old vaccination is noticeable, and while not altogether immune, owing to the time which had elapsed since the vaccination, yet he was afforded a very considerable degree of protection, and was affected by the disease in an appreciably modified form.

As evidence that vaccination affords absolute protection against smallpox is the fact that of the five people in constant attendance upon these patients not one acquired the disease, although living continually in an atmosphere and amongst surroundings which were absolutely impregnated with the contagion of the disease. These five people were all protected, one, it is interesting to note, by a former attack of smallpox when a child, the remaining four by recent successful vaccination. They adopted no special precautions to safeguard themselves, being confident that they were absolutely immune against the disease, and such proved to be the case.

These observations, then, confirm the claims that have been made in favour of vaccination:—

- (1.) Recent successful vaccination is an absolute protection against smallpox.
- (2.) Successful vaccination in the past will afford some degree of protection, depending on time which has elapsed since the vaccination was performed.

M. H. WATT,  
District Health Officer.

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