

impose on it the duty of refusing to advertise underpaid posts for barristers and solicitors. There are, however, intrinsic differences between the two professions which affect the position which they occupy with regard to their members. We do not desire to advise lawyers as to what it is consistent with their dignity to accept by way of remuneration as members of a learned profession or as to what is necessary for their maintenance. Outside any such questions as these, there is, with regard to medical appointments, a more important point to be considered. The medical profession is responsible for the public health, and it realises that it is not in the public interest that posts should be held by men whose experience and training have not qualified them to do so with credit to themselves and with advantage to the public.

In the particular case under consideration the chairman actually admitted that he had had a letter from the Ministry of Health stating that tuberculosis officers should have special qualifications and experience, and expressing a doubt as to whether the salary offered would be sufficient to secure them. Mr. Willis Bund "objected to this sort of pressure being put upon local authorities." We can only express our satisfaction at the attitude taken up in the public interest by the public authority. For ourselves, if refusal to insert the advertisements of the Worcestershire County Council should appear to that body to be arbitrary or dictatorial, we would assure its members that it is neither. It is due to our full appreciation of the requirements of the Council and of those of the public with the care of whose health it has been entrusted.

IODINE DISINFECTION.

THE efficiency of disinfection of the skin with iodine has recently been the subject of painstaking investigations by Dr. Johan Seedorf,¹ a countryman of Professor Rovsing, whose criticism of this popular method of disinfection has done much to prevent its acquiring the unimpeachable security of stereotyped orthodoxy. Rovsing's indictment, it may be remembered, was supported by cases in which tetanus or gas phlegmon developed in spite of pre-operative treatment of the skin with iodine. Dr. Seedorf's investigations were made both *in vivo* and *in vitro*. With regard to the latter, he found that iodine (0.1 per cent.) in an aqueous solution of potassium iodide kills staphylococci in one minute, but tetanus spores only after two hours. This disinfectant action of iodine increases with the strength of the solution only up to a certain point; its maximum efficiency is exhibited by a 1 per cent. solution. In confirmation of earlier investigations, it was found that, though alcohols readily kill the ordinary bacteria, their action on the spore-forming group is very slight, whereas that of iodine is much more effective. The effect of iodine on the skin was studied on rats' tails as well as on human skin. It was noted that the disinfectant action of iodine on a rat's tail was not checked by previous washing with soap and water, and this was so whether the skin was still moist or not after the washing. The same observation was made on the human skin, and this point is the more interesting as some advocates of iodine disinfection have insisted on dryness of the skin being an essential preliminary to the applica-

tion of iodine. Dr. Seedorf made a series of interesting comparative investigations into the effect of iodine sterilisation as practised in three different surgical departments. All used a 5 per cent. solution of tincture of iodine, but the ritual differed in the various departments according to the inclination of each surgeon and the urgency of the operations. At the beginning of each operation a piece of skin, which had been treated with iodine, was excised and submitted to a bacteriological examination. Although the skin was found to be sterile only in 42 per cent., healing by first intention was effected in 90 per cent. of the cases in which drainage was not maintained. In 3 per cent. abscesses formed in the operation wound, and stitch abscesses formed in 7 per cent. In all these post-operative septic cases the excised portions of skin yielded micro-organisms. But in spite of these shortcomings Dr. Seedorf recommends iodine disinfection, especially when it is preceded by mechanical cleansing, and when three paintings of iodine are given at intervals of five to ten minutes during the last half hour before operation. He employs a 1 per cent. solution of iodine dissolved in 96 per cent. of ethyl-alcohol. If time permits there should be an interval of about 12 hours between the soap-and-water cleansing and the application of the iodine. In emergencies soap-and-water washing should be omitted in order that repeated applications of iodine may be made.

THE CARE OF EPILEPTICS IN AMERICA.

THE twenty-sixth annual report of the New York State (Craig) Colony for Epileptics contains, as in former years, a good deal of pertinent material by the medical superintendent, Dr. W. T. Shanahan, about the care of epileptics. Dr. Shanahan lays stress on the importance of individualisation in treatment, pointing out that the whole of the environment, including diet, drugs, and especially occupation and education, must be considered along individual, rather than along general, lines. Not the least important factor in this environmental adjustment is the appointment and retention upon the staff of the best type of men and women; and Dr. Shanahan pleads for money to provide suitable diversion and recreation for the employees who have to live, day in and day out, among the patients. Such expenditure, he rightly argues, would be an indirect but effective means of treating the patients themselves. Little appears in this report about the use of bromides. Those who have followed the work at the Craig Colony will remember that between 1904 and 1915 the average daily dose of bromide was reduced from 20.5 to 0.6 gr. per patient, and that during the same period the incidence of fits was, if anything, rather diminished. Dr. Shanahan continues to report favourably upon this very restricted use of bromide, and remarks that cases of status epilepticus and serial seizures have been much less frequent than in former years, when bromides were used more freely. The omission in the report of any reference to psychogenic factors in epilepsy or to psycho-therapeutics in its treatment is surprising, as Dr. Pierce Clark, visiting neurologist to the colony, has long been recognised as a pioneer worker in this aspect of the aetiology and treatment of the disease. Epilepsy is essentially a disease arising in childhood; and it is during childhood that general environmental adjustment is of paramount importance; for it is then that we have

¹ Acta Chirurgica Scandinavica, 1920, vol. lli., Fasc. v.