

[Choksy KBNH \(1908\)](#). On recent progress in serum-therapy of plague. *BMJ* 1:1282-1284.

Key passages

ON RECENT PROGRESS IN THE SERUM-THERAPY OF PLAGUE.

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Observations at Bombay.

The observations at Bombay were conducted at the Maratha Plague Hospital by the present writer, and concerned 438 cases; 243 cases were treated by him and others in private practice.†

The Method of Treatment.—Clinical experience having repeatedly demonstrated that the “alternate method” as hitherto applied was unsuited to an affection of the nature of plague, as also the fact that the 55 to 60 per cent. of hospital admissions already septicaemic do not respond to treatment by drugs or serum, the method adopted consisted in rejecting all those who appeared to have hardly any probability of benefiting by the serum treatment. Convalescent and semiconvalescent cases were further eliminated, as well as those in whom the illness had already lasted for six days or more. The latter were excluded since experience has shown that patients who are alive on the sixth day are either too far advanced for treatment or are just beginning to improve spontaneously. The observations were thus restricted to the most acute cases within the first five days of illness, and 238 cases were treated in this way. This method met with the approval of Professor C. J. Martin, of the Lister Institute (member of the Advisory Committee for Plague Investigation in India). He suggested that, after rejecting the unfit cases, every alternate case might be treated with the serum, so that those left untreated would serve as controls. This system of “rational alternation” for testing the utility of the serum in hospital practice, and thus obtaining an exact numerical demonstration of the benefit derived from its application, was adopted in a further series of 400 cases.