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Cochrane AL (1941). Reported in: Sickness in Salonica: my first, worst, and most successful clinical trial. BMJ 1984;289:1726-1727.

Key passages

1726

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Sickness in Salonica: my first, worst, and most successful clinical trial

A L COCHRANE

I became desperate. I was severely jaundiced and had pitting oedema above the knees. I argued in vain with the Germans. I decided that something must be done, and that I was the only one who could do it. I had a vague memory of the phrase "wet beriberi," so I decided to see if I could show that the oedema was due to a vitamin deficiency. That night I bought some yeast on the black market and the next morning I recruited 20 young prisoners. There seemed little wrong with them except emaciation above the waist and pitting oedema to above the knees. I gave them a short talk about my medical hero James Lind and they agreed to cooperate in an experiment. I cleared two wards. I numbered the 20 prisoners off: odd numbers to one ward and evens to the other. Each man in one ward received two spoonfuls of yeast daily. The others got one tablet of vitamin C from my "iron" reserve.