FULMINATING GAS GANGRENE OF THE BRAIN: REPORT OF A CASE IN A CIVILIAN

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Reports of the effects of infection of the human tissues with Clostridium welchii and associated organisms form a voluminous literature. During the last five (war) years more than three hundred such papers, dealing with all phases of the problem, have been published. Only one report, that by a committee of Soviet scientists, gave consideration to gas infections of the brain. These were complications of craniocerebral injuries acquired in war. The literature contains many accounts of cases of gas gangrene occurring in civilian hospitals, but none with such an infection of the brain. It was therefore thought that report of the following case would be of interest.

CASE REPORT

P. P., a colored male, age 45, was brought to the Accident Room of the Johns Hopkins Hospital in the afternoon of Nov. 11, 1944, with the story of having been struck on the head with a garden rake about 6 or 7 hours before. There had been no unconsciousness, and the patient complained only of multiple lacerations over the right side of the head. He was ambulatory, and his temperature, pulse and respirations were all normal. About an hour after his admission to the Accident Department he began to show convulsive seizures affecting the left side of his face, and developed a little facial weakness of upper motor neuron type. X-rays at this time revealed three small depressed fractures in the right parietal bone, so spaced that they were quite compatible with the weapon used (Fig. 1).

Fig. 1. X-ray showing three small depressed fractures in right parietal bone.
Fig. 2. Bone fragments have been removed. The subjacent brain is filled with gas bubbles.

Fig. 3. Cross section of cerebral hemispheres showing necrosis on right and bubbles of gas on both sides.