

## HISTORICAL ORTHOPAEDIC ARTEFACTS FACT SHEET No 5

### Torticollis collar



It is unknown who invented this device. It was used in the correction of torticollis ('wry' neck) from any cause. Torticollis is a deviation of the head to one side due to spasm or to shortening of certain neck structures. The condition commonly termed congenital torticollis is thought to be due to birth injury and is therefore an acquired condition. True congenital torticollis is rare and is associated with uneven changes in the cervical spine.

#### Treatment

No treatment was advised until disease of the cervical spine itself had been excluded by clinical and radiological examination. Treatment could be conservative or operative. In early life, passive stretching of the affected muscle was given as soon as possible after birth. The mother was usually taught to do this by a physiotherapist but the nurse could be called on to assist.

The torticollis collar is similar in construction to a Thomas' collar except for a few small differences.

Buckled to the collar in front is an axillary strap of leather which passes under the axilla (armpit) of the sound side to buckle on to the collar at the back. When in place and firmly buckled, this serves to increase the corrective force of the splint.

In order to measure the patient for this splint it was important that the head was held in the over-corrected position with the chin well down.

#### Measurements required

1. The circumference of the neck.
2. From the point of the chin to the notch on the sternum (breastbone).
3. From the angle of the jaw to the clavicle (collar bone) on the affected side.

The splint maker was told whether a right or left torticollis collar was required.

This apparatus is no longer used.

#### Sources

1. Powell, M. Orthopaedic nursing. 6<sup>th</sup> ed. Livingstone, 1968, p 73, 276
2. Roaf, R & Hodgkinson, LJ. The Oswestry textbook for orthopaedic nurses. Pitman, 1963, p 17, 281-282