

Letter from Erasmus Darwin to James Watt, 1796/06/01

Darwin writes to Watt about the treatment of abscess and comments on the use of a centrifugal bed.

Derby June 1 . 96

My dear friend,

I return you many thanks for both your ingenious elegant apparatus, & for your kind letter. Amongst the first, alas! I could not find the mouth piece, & shall therefore at your leizure beg a drawing of it in duo size, - unless you can sometime send me one by the coach.

In respect to the first case in your letter, where I suppose one of the processes of a vertibra may be carious, or there may perhaps exist a psoas[?] abscess I fear little is to be expected but from time. If there be felt a carious bone, I do not see, what use an issue(?) can(?) be of; tho' it is supposed to contribute to heal other ulcers in its vicinity, - which I nevertheless doubt.

Could an air syringe capping glass be applied to the sores once a day, & thus the matter be press'd out by the atmospheric pressure, & prevented by its delay from becoming putrid.? could the wounds be carefully kept as much as possible from atmospheric air by a watch-glass, or tin-cup, with reverted edges, put over them, & kept on by adhesive plaster?

The second case is truly carious, & as far as a single case goes, shews the use of Hydro Carbonate.

It will give me pleasure to see your cousin, whether he is a philosopher or not, I shall at any time be glad of a drawing of your centrifugal bed, but these experiments can only be tried in Hospitals

Mrs Darwin begs to join me in our best wishes & compl to Mrs Watt & yourself from, dear Sir your sincere friend

E Darwin