

PERNICIOUS VOMITING OF PREGNANCY.

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We are much indebted to Dr. Whitridge Williams of Baltimore and his assistants, who have demonstrated, to some extent at least, the nature of the disturbances of metabolism which cause a peculiar toxemia, and pernicious vomiting during pregnancy. Chemical examination of the urine in such cases shows a decrease in the amount of nitrogen excreted as urea, and an increase in the amount excreted as ammonia. Without referring to other changes we may accept the fact that this excess of ammonia excreted, or, as it is called, the ammonia coefficient, furnishes a fair indication of the severity of the poisoning. In normal pregnancy it is 4 or 5 per cent., and in cases of toxemia may rise to 10, 20, 40 per cent., or even higher. Dr. Williams has expressed the opinion that if this ammonia coefficient exceeds 10 per cent. the patient's life is endangered, and the pregnancy should be immediately terminated.

The following history is interesting in certain respects:

Patient.—Mrs. A., aged 27, secundipara, became pregnant early in August, 1908. Nausea and vomiting commenced early in September. Treatment, including the administration of cathartics, sedatives and enemata of salt solutions, failed to relieve the symptoms. She steadily grew worse until September 30, when the ammonia coefficient was 14 per cent. The most distressing symptom was almost constant nausea, which prevented her from eating, drinking or sleeping. The clinical signs, and the results of chemical examination, appeared to indicate the advisability or necessity for the induction of abortion. The maternal instincts, however, were very strong in the patient. She preferred to take great risks so far as her own life was concerned in the interests of her unborn babe.

Treatment and Clinical Course.—It was found that a hypodermic injection of one-quarter of a grain of morphine had no effect, and it was thought that a large dose might quiet those nerve

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