

Spontaneous abortion under study by Med team

In Halifax, twelve percent of all mothers-to-be lose their child by spontaneous abortion. Five years ago a Dalhousie research team began to investigate the causes of unintentional and often tragic abortions.

EXTENSIVE STUDY

The team led by Dr. W. Tupper, head of Obstetrics at the Medical School, and Dr. R. Weil, Professor of Psychiatry, planned an extensive study of the causes, statistics, and therapy of spontaneous abortion. The team consisted of an obstetrician, psychiatrist, pathologist, biochemist, and endocrinologist. Often a woman is not able to produce a live, healthy child even after three or more consecutive abortions; she is then classed as an 'habitual aborter'. The study included all habitual aborters treated at the Victoria General Hospital.

Current theories suggested that spontaneous abortion had many causes. Mechanical or toxic factors, defective circulation or nutrition, hormone or vitamin imbalances have all been cited as probable causes. In the study of these diverse assumptions and the study and review of the literature, the Dalhousie team noted that all and varied types of therapy in the hands of enthusiastic therapists influenced the course of pregnancy. Often the doctor who has great faith in his method of treatment has a high degree of success, even if his theory is far-fetched and untenable. The confidence of the doctor in his own therapy and the confidence which this may produce in the patient can influence the emotional state of the mother. Tupper's interdisciplinary study Tupper's interdisciplinary study set causal relationship of emotions and spontaneous abortion.

ROUTINE

A routine was carried out on all cases of threatened abortion seen at the Hospital. The patient was carefully examined by the obstetrician and interviewed by a psychiatrist; lab tests were carried out by the biochemist and endocrinologist. At regular meetings of the research team, the clinical and laboratory findings were evaluated for each of the one hundred and eleven cases. "Our findings have proved contrary to most of the conventionally held etiologic ideas," observed Dr. Tupper, "however, we encountered regularly certain personality factors which suggested to us that certain women are more abortion-prone than others."

The cases belonged to two personality groups: the immature wife unable to accept the responsibility of motherhood, and the career woman who is unsatisfied with the dependent state of maternity. A woman in one of these classes will not necessarily lose her child during pregnancy, but undue emotional stress may cause her to abort. The stress often involved an absent or uninterested husband. Dr. Tupper's group, in the course of studying individual cases, gave the women reassurance through interest in their pregnancy and tried to encourage a better husband-wife rapport.

Research worker W.H. James collected and evaluated the project's data, and concluded that there was a significant rate of success. Thirty-eight habitual aborters were divided into experimental and control groups. In the first group, nineteen habitual aborters were given detailed supportive therapy during pregnancy, while the second group of nineteen were followed with only routine care by the family physician. The therapy consisted of personal interviews and discussions emphasizing family relationships, in order to relieve stresses upon the expectant mothers. Sixteen of the wives treated by the Dalhousie group had full-term live births, whereas the untreated control group had only five live births. The survival rate in the experimental group was eighty-four per cent as compared with the control group of twenty-six per cent.

THERAPEUTIC APPROACH

The therapeutic approach devised by the team met with results significant enough to warrant its use as a routine technique. In the laboratory, it was found that the blood serum of habitual aborters contained high

and fluctuating amounts of certain red sheep cell agglutinating substances. Pathological changes in placentae were discovered. Differences in hormone levels were also noted. These findings show that a definite pattern of characteristics is exhibited by the woman who is usually unable to produce a live child. Each variable is obviously involved in the pattern that commonly leads to spontaneous abortion. Since continued interest in the patient during her pregnancy often halts a threatened abortion, external stresses must play a role in the cycle that links blood and hormone changes to loss of the child. Internal changes perhaps express external emotional upsets.

The psychological and laboratory findings of Dr. Tupper's group, which is supported by a Federal Health Grant, have been published in several Canadian and American journals. Work continues here at Dalhousie to produce further knowledge of the causes and cure of this once poorly understood condition.

Danger in being too friendly

TORONTO (CUP) There may be a danger in being too friendly to foreign students.

Mrs. R. G. Riddell, adviser to overseas students at the University of Toronto told delegates to a national conference dealing with service to overseas students we ought to be careful not to put "foreign students on the auction block."

She said the foreign student too often deluged with offers of assistance and is never given an opportunity to be himself.

"Foreign students have asked me why we are more interested in helping students from Thailand than from Newfoundland," she said.

"They want to know why we have this interest. They want to know if there is an ulterior motive."

She said the services Canada provides the foreign student are only a means to an end and that the real end is "real communication."

"Don't keep reminding him of the things done for him," Mrs. Riddell said. "Point up the things he has done here in Canada."

INTEGRATION NEEDED

Mrs. Riddell said integration in providing foreign student services was needed. "It's better to have a foreign student working alongside a Canadian student on such things as overseas student reception services."

Douglas Mayer, general-secretary of World University Service of Canada, said foreign students are confused by the proliferation of service groups in this country.

Dr. Geoffrey Andrew, executive-secretary of Canadian Universities Foundation, said a partial solution to this confusion may lie in the appointment of an external affairs officer at each university.

NO ASSISTANCE

Dr. Francis J. Leddy, WUSC national chairman, told delegates there are many students who want no assistance in settling into university life in Canada.

"In many cases these people have already had university experience — and they also have the confidence of youth."

The conference was convened by the Friendly Relations with Overseas Students committee and brought together representatives of several universities, Canadian Universities Foundation, NFCUS WUSC, the YM-WCA, various church boards and many public service groups.

Miss Dalhousie 1963



MISS BETH TRERICE was crowned Campus Queen at the Student Council formal March 8 by retiring president Dr. A. E. Kerr. A second-year Science student, Miss Trerice had previously been elected Science Queen.

Architects' plans for new Med School near completion — construction within a year?

Architects' plans for the new seven-story building for the Medical School are nearing completion. It is hoped that construction will begin on the \$4,500,000 structure within the year.

As part of the same project, the Medical Sciences building on College Street will be remodelled to house the Faculty of Health Professions, and the Public Health

Clinic will be converted for research purposes.

The present Medical Sciences building was designed in 1922 for 50 students and one staff member in each of the three pre-clinical science departments. The building is now used by some 70 undergraduate students, as well as three to six staff members in each department, post-doctoral fellows, graduate students and other research workers.

The new Medical building will have a total floor area of 164,500 square feet and will accommodate 100 medical and 50 dental students to cover needs for the next 15 years. Facilities will also be provided for medical science classes for nurses, pharmacists, physiotherapists, etc. Forty per cent of the area will be devoted to research.

Present plans also call for an auditorium and offices in the Medical and Dental library, whose facilities will be moved to the new structure.

These are "the minimum requirements to enable the school to keep abreast of its commitments," says Medical Dean Dr. C. B. Stewart. "As things stand now," he

says, "the growth of the Medical School is stifled by lack of facilities. The faster we can start building the better it will be for the health care of Nova Scotia and the Maritimes. All our hopes are focussed on the present Dalhousie Fund Campaign and the provincial government to produce the money for this and other urgent expansion work."

Barb Pickard CUP Secretary

OTTAWA (CUP) Canadian University Press president-elect Sid Black has announced the appointment of Miss Barb Pickard of Carleton University as CUP's National Secretary for 1963-64.

Miss Pickard, currently the managing editor of The Carleton, is a 21-year-old native of Olds, Alta. She is in her third year of a four year journalism course at Carleton.

Her appointment completes the association's senior executive. Vice-president is John Macfarlane, Editor-in-chief of the University of Alberta at Calgary Gauntlet.

ATTENTION!

Any society or organization wishing to hold a dance or function at the university during the year 1963-64 should send a representative to a meeting called to set dates.

The meeting will be held in the East Common Room of the Arts Annex Thursday, March 21 at 7:00 p.m. Any group that is not represented at the meeting will probably be unlucky next year if it wants to hold a dance on university property.