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The Medical Applications of Natural Family Planning

***by Thomas W. Hilgers, M.D.,
Pope Paul VI Institute for the Study of Human Reproduction.***

Dr. Tom Hilgers is one of the most outstanding Catholic physicians in the United States. He is director of the Pope Paul VI Institute for the Study of Human Reproduction, in Omaha, Nebraska. This book is published by the Pope Paul VI Institute Press.

The Creighton Model Natural Family Planning System is described with its own specialized vocabulary and terminology. This is an innovative evaluation of the endocrinology of the menstrual cycle with a physiological understanding of the effects of stress and the premenstrual syndrome. He gives the indications and reasons for the use of progesterone support in the menstrual cycle and in pregnancy.

Dr. Hilgers treats fertility as a normal healthy process. Couples participating are trying to achieve or avoid pregnancy. Charting is based upon the fundamentals used in the ovulation method of Drs. John and Lyn Billings of Melbourne, Australia.

Every Catholic physician should be familiar with the basics of charting the menstrual cycle because he or she is likely to be chosen as medical consultant when a problem arises. The chapter on evaluation of infertility and miscarriage is particularly important for every doctor who provides care for women. The following chapter on treatment of infertility is also excellent.

Progesterone therapy presents a problem. First of all, it is controversial. Many of us send severe PMT cases to psychiatrists for help. Progesterone is not absorbed orally. It is given as vaginal suppository or capsule or by intramuscular injection. Most critical is the timing of progesterone support. Dr. Hilgers obtains microcrystalline progesterone powder from Paddocks Laboratory in Minneapolis. Local pharmacists make special capsules for vaginal insertion. Dr. Hilgers teaches husbands to give progesterone injections to their wives when they are indicated. A scientific controlled study is certainly needed.

What will the future bring? Dr. Hilgers speculates about that. Much depends upon how governments of the world recognize marriage and family as the basic unit of society. Dr. Hilgers says that the "ovulation method is the gold standard for natural family planning." His book has been written so that physicians can become more interested and involved in the treatment of patients who require their support. "Those who use NFP can fulfill their dream of an ecologically balanced procreative and sexual life."

Every Catholic physician should read this book.

— John J. Brennan, M.D.

Prenatal Diagnosis: Confronting the Ethical Issues

by Angeta Sutton

London: The Linacre Centre, 1990. 226 pp. £ 10.95.

Prenatal diagnosis has now become a routine part of obstetrical practice in most Western countries. Yet it is by no means the sort of morally neutral diagnostic tool it is sometimes made out