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In 31 subjects (45 menstrual cycles) the time of ovulation was studied in relation to cycle length. Urinary excretion of estrogen was used as the criterion of ovulation. The day of ovulation was found to be variable (4 days before to 6 days after midcycle).


(Author's Summary) The rhythm method of child spacing has been subjected to the test of experience during the past 30 years. Pregnancy rates (per 100 woman-years' total time) have been reported as 30 (Latz and Reiner, as reanalyzed by Hartman), 21.7 and 14.4 (Rodriguez), 28 (Tietze) and 14.4 (Rock et al.). The author reviews the mathematical laws of compound probability that a married woman can go through a single cycle without conception. The mathematical laws of compound probability show that a security factor of 93 per cent is needed for a probable spacing of 18 months between births (pregnancy rate 67). The security factor must be raised to 98 per cent to lengthen the spacing to 3 to 4 years (pregnancy rate 56) and up to 99.4 per cent, to bring the pregnancy rate down to the medically acceptable upper limit of 10.

The relation between the security factor q and coital frequency is variable. For couples who can successfully utilize the hyperthermic premenstrual phase of the cycle (Montrélle 'Semen' method), coitus should not affect q. For women who cannot be certain as to the time of ovulation, the security factor q is decreased by a risk factor of at least 2 per cent for each unprotected coitus in the cycle. This risk factor makes spacings longer than 18 months between births unlikely. For couples who are not successful in the rhythm method, contraceptive assistance is needed to place natural methods on a secure foundation, in fulfillment of a hope expressed by Pius XII in 1951.


The question of how much to tell the patient who has a poor prognosis is still undecided. However, Dr. Robert S. Schvah, a neurologist at Harvard Medical School, believes patients should be told the truth. In support of this thesis is his experience with 300 patients who had Parkinson's disease and to whom he presented full information regarding diagnosis and prognosis. In reply to his query a year later as to whether such information had helped or hindered them, 209 stated that they were grateful for having been given the facts. "Difficult though it may be, the physician should always tell patients the truth. But we must temper frankness and honesty with optimism and hope."


Use of the rhythm method of child-spacing imposes severe limitation on the woman whose menstrual cycle is irregular. A means of regularizing menstrual cycles is described in the February issue of LINACRE QUARTERLY. While there is no question about the morality of this approach, the medical aspects remain to be proven. "... our fingers are tentatively crossed. There have been articles like this before, and they have ended as false positives."


The limited success that has attended the use of chronic intermittent hemodialysis for renal failure has been responsible for a number of problems. In addition to the medical difficulties associated with hemodialysis there are significant moral and ethical aspects. Chronic dialysis is still in the investigative stage and patient selection should depend on the willingness of the individual to be a research subject after receiving adequate information (informed consent). Overt or subtle coercion must be avoided.


According to Professor J. G. Scadding of London, the clinical evaluation of
new antituberculosis drugs such as capreomycin presents a considerable ethical problem. Since current therapy is so effective and standardized, it is difficult to find ethical justification for resorting to new drugs as initial therapy and hence clinical evaluation of such agents is impeded.


Because of environmental improvements, of which medical progress is one facet, "there arises a well-founded fear of building up in the human population a huge and increasing genetic liability like the national debt. I myself am not dismayed by this prospect... The point is that the rate of genetic deterioration brought about by the methods I have just described is extremely slow... Solutions will be found. They might take the form, as many people have suggested, of direct genetic intervention, a sort of genetic repair process of a kind known to be able to cure certain genetic shortcomings of bacteria. At any rate, the point I want to make is that we must not at this time arrogate to ourselves the task of trying to find solutions for all the problems that may afflict man in the future."

[M. C. Kagan: "The whole concept of genetic intervention is based on the assumption of a hereditary norm..."


A thoughtful study of the subject, buttressed by frequent reference to pertinent papal pronouncements.]


The advances of science seem to have made man self-assured in his ability to control his destiny. However, there is ample evidence of persisting dependence on things spiritual, particularly in times of stress. Man is beginning to find that some alone can fetter his beliefs just as rigidly as religion alone."

I suspect there is awareness of his inborn limitations and dependence but that the sophistication of modern science makes it unusual to acknowledge them.


A new era of sexual "freedom" has been proclaimed, but the freedom of promiscuity is not true freedom. "Sex is more than a mechanism for procreation, and it is more than an avenue for sensual gratification. It is a function that promotes the growth of character." A false concept of truth and beauty is engendered by those who equate sex with a self-indulgence, and beauty with what is merely physically pleasing. "A beautiful life is achieved only by the man and wife who share an unselfish love, who fulfill each other sexually, and who gladly abide by their vows to remain true to each other to the end of their days."

Additional items of interest include the following:


Cavanagh, John R. (M.D.) The Popes, the Pill, and the People. Bruce: Milwaukee 1965. $3.95.


Ashton, 1965.


—: Medicine-religion role to be expanded. AMA New 82 Feb. 1, 1965.


Ortiz, M.: Purely biological. America 112:195-106 Feb. 6, 1965. ("The controversy over contraception is at bottom a debate over the nature and meaning of human sexuality. It is frequently assumed in this debate that the unitive function of sex is its human side, while the procreative function is its animal or 'purely biological' side. One of our readers has written to us to dispute this assumption.")


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