

## MEDICINE

# Painless Childbirth

Hundreds of mothers have had babies in comfort and safety without loss of consciousness thanks to new method of anesthesia.

➤ MORE THAN 700 mothers in the last year have had their babies in complete comfort and safety, without pain and without loss of consciousness, thanks to a new method of childbirth anesthesia. Details of the method, developed by Dr. Robert A. Hingson and Dr. Waldo B. Edwards, of the U. S. Public Health Service, are reported in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* (Jan. 23).

"Continuous caudal analgesia" is the technical name of the new method for banishing the pain of childbirth. It consists of continuous injection near the base of the spine of a pain-killing chemical, metycaine. The drug temporarily blocks the nerve pathways for pain but does not affect those controlling muscles needed for voluntary delivery of the baby.

The injections are started while the mother is in her room in the hospital.

She does not become unconscious but can eat, sleep, read or talk to visitors until just before the baby is ready to be delivered. At this time she is taken to the delivery room, but the anesthetic injection continues until she is ready to be taken back to her room after the baby's birth.

"One hundred per cent effective" and "perfect painless childbirth" without harmful effect on mother or child are among the comments of doctors who have used the method, as quoted by the editor of the *A.M.A. Journal*. The editor considered the results reported by Dr. Hingson and Dr. Edwards so significant that he promptly assembled, for the benefit of physicians generally, the opinions of other doctors having experience with the method. Although it has been in use for only a year, the experience in the opinion of the A.M.A. editor, seems to "warrant the belief that it constitutes a

real advance in securing relief of pain for mothers during childbirth."

The doctors who devised the method report using it or supervising its use in 589 cases with no complications or deaths among the mothers. Three of the babies died, but not as a result of the anesthetic. Use of the method in another 20 cases, with three failures for two of which the exact cause was difficult to determine, is reported in the same issue of the *Journal* by Dr. Thomas G. Gready, Jr., and Dr. H. Close Hessel-tine, of the University of Chicago and Chicago Lying-In Hospital. From Syracuse (N. Y.) University College of Medicine 85 successful cases are reported and from the Mayo Clinic another 50. Altogether it has been used in about a score of institutions.

The method, it is emphasized by all the doctors reporting on it and by the editor of the *A.M.A. Journal*, should be used only in hospitals and only by competent physicians and anesthetists specially trained to give this type of anesthetic.

*Science News Letter, January 30, 1943*

## PUBLIC HEALTH

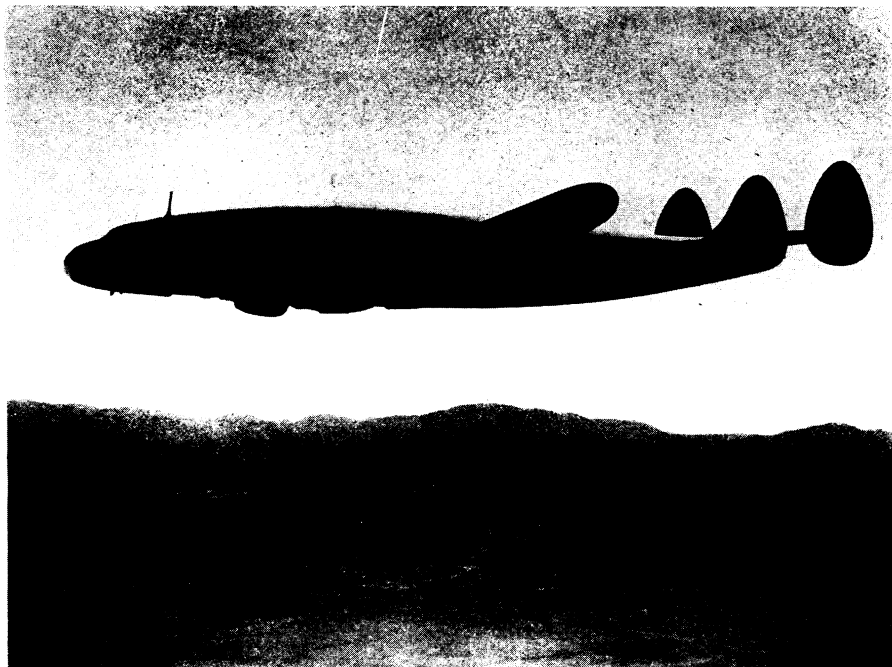
## Learn How to Use Rabbit Meat Safely

➤ WITH THE SHORTAGE of other kinds of meat, wild rabbits are likely to be used for food more than usual this year. Rabbit hunting is good sport and the meat is a nutritious supplement to the diet, particularly valuable right now, the New York State Health Department points out. Contact with wild rabbits, however, does bring a certain risk of getting sick with tularemia or "rabbit fever."

Hunters, housewives, chefs and others who handle wild rabbits should know the simple precautions which will protect them against this distressing disease. Measures suggested by the New York Health Department follow:

1. Leave the too-easily secured rabbit alone. If a rabbit is an easy shot, the chances are it is ill, and may be infected with tularemia.

2. Do not clean the rabbit if you have any sores, cuts or other lesions on your hands. Even if you have no such lesions, it is well to wear rubber gloves when cleaning the rabbit and to wash the gloves thoroughly with soap and hot water before taking them off. Infection is usually acquired through contact with the blood or internal organs of rabbits and in almost every single case which has occurred thus far in New York State,



"CONSTELLATION"—New largest and fastest land-based cargo or transport plane, is the new Lockheed powered by four Wright Cyclone engines. It is said to be able to carry as many as 57 persons all the way across the continent in 9 hours.