

Many family disasters may result from this if, as in cases Dr. Lindemann cited, the soldier returns and complains his wife does not love him any longer and demands an immediate divorce.

In such cases the wife has done her "grief work" so effectively that she has emancipated herself from the departed husband and must readjust herself to his presence again.

The "grief work" which the bereaved must do consists in emancipating herself from bondage to the deceased and finding new patterns of rewarding interactions, forming new relationships and readjusting to an environment in which the deceased is missing. Comfort alone will not give enough help in this job of grief work. The severe cases, especially when the person develops great

and often frightening feeling of hostility, will need the help of a psychiatrist.

Since there are not enough psychiatrists to aid all the war-bereaved, ministers and social workers will have to acquire enough psychiatric knowledge to help the persons with normal grief reactions and to recognize the signs of more ominous trouble and refer such patients to psychiatrists for aid.

Persons who try to escape the discomfort of grief reaction by refusing to talk or think about their loss or by imagining the deceased is still with them are only storing up trouble for themselves. Much better, Dr. Lindemann says, is to express their sorrow and sense of loss and any guilt they feel and then work through to new feelings and patterns of conduct.

Science News Letter, May 27, 1944

MEDICINE

Preventing Rh Deaths

➤ HOPE that vitamin C, the anti-scurvy vitamin of orange and tomato juice, might save the babies and their mothers who die because of the Rh factor in the baby's blood appears in a report by Dr. Lyman Burnham, of Englewood, N. J., at the New York meeting of the New York State Medical Society.

The Rh factor was first discovered in the blood of the Rhesus monkey, hence its name Rhesus factor, or Rh for short. Harmless in itself, it causes tragedy when blood containing it is mixed with blood not containing it, just as the mixing in the veins of any incompatible bloods may cause death. (*See SNL*, Nov. 27, 1943 and April 1)

When the baby has inherited the Rh factor from its father and the mother has non-Rh blood, the blood of the two cannot mix safely. Sometimes, however, the two bloods do mix before the child's birth and then the baby is likely to be still-born or to die soon after birth, though the first-born child in such a situation may survive.

How the mother's and baby's blood mixes before birth has not been understood. Dr. Burnham suggests that it is due to deficiency of vitamin C in the mother which results in a break in the blood vessels of the developing infant. This would permit its Rh blood to escape into the mother's blood. Capillary blood vessels are known to be fragile and likely to break when there is a deficiency of vitamin C.

The mother might not be so deficient

in vitamin C as to show signs of scurvy and yet might not be getting enough for her own needs plus the amount needed to give strength to the developing capillary blood vessels of her unborn infant.

In support of his theory, Dr. Burnham points out that in normal pregnancy the amount of vitamin C in the blood plasma decreases almost to deficiency levels and is only about one-third that of non-pregnancy. Food habits and tastes of the mother, seasonal variations in the amount of the vitamin in foods, and nausea and vomiting may keep the mother from getting enough vitamin C.

In 12 out of 13 mothers of babies with erythroblastosis, the condition resulting from the mixing of the baby's Rh blood with the mother's non-Rh blood, Dr. Burnham found from their histories that the mothers had apparently not been getting enough vitamin C in their diets during pregnancy.

Even when the mothers are eating enough vitamin C foods, they may have some condition that prevents absorption of the vitamin or increases its elimination by the kidneys. The latter occurs in dogs in the presence of increased female sex hormone. Large amounts of this hormone are normally found in human mothers in early pregnancy.

If Dr. Burnham's theory proves correct, it may be possible to prevent Rh deaths of mothers and babies by vitamin C treatment if the father's blood shows the Rh factor.

Science News Letter, May 27, 1944

PSYCHIATRY

First Aid to Save Minds Taught in New Courses

➤ A NEW KIND of first aid course, designed to teach people how to save minds threatened by battle or other war strain, just as the Red Cross first aid courses teach them to save lives threatened by hemorrhage and physical injury, was announced by Dr. Daniel Blain, of the U. S. Public Health Service, at the Philadelphia meeting of the American Psychiatric Association.

Experience at a rest home for men of the Merchant Marine who have broken mentally and emotionally led Dr. Blain and his associates, Dr. Paul Hoch of New York and Dr. V. Gerard Ryan of New Orleans, to develop this course in psychological first aid. Actually, there are three such courses, one elementary, one for lay persons, and two more advanced ones for teachers, medical personnel and physicians without special knowledge of psychiatry.

The elementary course teaches what the nerves are, how they affect the body, how the body responds to feelings of hunger, fear, anger, and the like, and how to keep both mind and body healthy.

There is a set of directions for psychological first aid in mild cases of mental or emotional disturbance which the patient can apply to himself, and another set of directions for first aid in acute cases to be applied by someone else.

Merchant seamen trained in these courses will be able, Dr. Blain believes, to help themselves and their mates in time of stress. Since civilians are also subject to war strains, he thinks they, too, should take courses in psychological first aid to learn how to apply a splint, as it were, to a mind threatening to crack if not helped through the emergency before the psychiatrist can arrive to take over.

Science News Letter, May 27, 1944

PHYSIOLOGY

New Three-Minute Test For Night Vision Used

➤ A NEW three-minute test of night vision is being installed in Navy ships and training centers to help in checking the fitness of men for duty as night flyers, night lookouts and other work requiring "cat's eye" vision, it is announced by the American Optical Company.