

MEDICINE

Cesarean Baby Dangers

A low level of drugs and anesthesia for mothers having cesarean deliveries is advised, since drugs can do more harm to the baby than the method of birth—By Faye Marley

► **DRUGS AND ANESTHETICS** given to the mother cause more trouble to cesarean babies than the method of birth.

But safe delivery for most of the 585 cesarean babies studied in a nationwide project was reported by Dr. Ralph C. Benson, chief of the obstetrics and gynecology department of the University of Oregon Medical School.

"No more babies were born with central nervous system deficiencies among the cesarean deliveries than among the rest of the 17,271 babies studied," Dr. Benson told *SCIENCE SERVICE*. "These babies are born sleepy, however, and it is impossible to tell at once whether there might be some abnormality."

He advised the lowest possible limit for pre-operative drugs and anesthesia for mothers having cesarean deliveries.

As to the number of cesarean babies advisable for a mother, it depends on how the scar heals. There is a space of one and a half inches for the operating area, he pointed out. Some women have had as many as ten or 12 operations, causing the same scars to be reopened. But there can be a limit to the safety of the repetitions, depending on various factors, he warned.

Young mothers who have had cesareans may have babies through natural labor if their physical condition, including pelvic size, permits. Sometimes a young mother is allowed to attempt natural labor for as long as six hours, but if the uterus is not dilated by that time, cesarean surgery should be performed.

Older mothers, above 35, who are having their first babies, may need cesarean delivery more than younger women. To allow even one mother among 100 to die because of neglect to recognize this need was called "obstetrical roulette" by Dr. Benson.

His report was given in Washington, D.C., at the first meeting of participating scientists in the Collaborative Perinatal Study sponsored by the National Institute of Neurological Diseases and Blindness, Bethesda, Md. The study has been underway four years at 15 collaborating medical centers across the country. So far 22,000 women have been studied in an attempt to find answers to questions concerning cerebral palsy, mental retardation and other neurological and sensory disorders of infancy and childhood. A total of 50,000 women will be studied.

• *Science News Letter*, 84:22 July 13, 1963

GENETICS

Treat Race Scientifically

► **THE FACTS** about race are turning out to be as spectacular as the fantasies. Therefore, racial subjects can be treated 100% scientifically, a German scientist advises the United States as the U.S. racial issue gets hotter and hotter.

Having lived through the racial turmoil of World War II Germany, Prof. F. Keiter of the University of Wuerzburg knows how half-scientific facts can confuse an issue.

Myths and misconceptions are still standing in the way of race studies, he declares in a report published by the American Eugenics Society in *Eugenics Quarterly*, 10:22, 1963. Until they are swept away, true conclusions about racial differences will not be reached.

Scientific evidence on racial differences, Prof. Keiter says, is still rather flimsy. "Nobody really knows" if the stiffness and reserve of the northern European really exist. But it is "rather likely," he believes, that intellectual and emotional as well as genetic differences between races are real.

The study of race is not legitimate when it is designed to prove a preconceived notion. It is valid, Prof. Keiter says, only when it is meant to deepen understanding of the genetic

changes that climate and historical events have produced on a people.

Such research on European populations has shown:

1. Physical harmony rather than disharmony is characteristic of racially mixed humans. Research with humans shows that the children of very different parents are no more varied or extreme than children of very similar parents.

2. Although races of livestock can be artificially bred, there are no "pure-bred" human races.

3. Racial characteristics—such as blood type, stature, pigmentation—can often be mapped out geographically. From south to north, in Europe, skin tones progress from dark to light; height goes from short to tall. Within races, however, characteristics are distributed along the familiar normal curve.

4. Shape of the nose, lips and other facial characteristics "definitely belong more to the range of individuality than to race."

Race undoubtedly played a more positive role in history than has yet been shown, Prof. Keiter believes.

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SOCIOLOGY

Religious Affiliation Prevents Few Marriages

► **RELIGION** is not the dominant factor in choosing a marriage partner, survey of 3,658 young married persons in Pennsylvania has shown.

Only 42% of those questioned married someone with the same religious affiliation. The Roman Catholics and Mennonites were the most "closed" groups, with about 59% marrying within their own group, while Episcopalians were the most "open," with only 22%.

After marriage, 12% switched from their religion to that of their spouse, bringing the same-religion marriages to 54%, still only slightly more than half. There was no significant difference among religions as to percentage of conversions after marriage.

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GENETICS

Facial Paralysis May Be Inherited

► **A MYSTERIOUS** paralysis that grips the face muscles, called Bell's palsy, may be caused by an inherited factor.

Doctors, for years at a loss to explain the origins of the disease, had placed the blame on drafts and chills. But research now shows that Bell's palsy "runs in families," and thus may be inherited.

Of 105 patients with the palsy, more than one-fourth reported additional members of their family had the disease. Persons without Bell's palsy, Dr. Milton Alter of the University of Minnesota Hospitals, Minneapolis, found, tended to come from families without the disease.

Bell's palsy itself may be inherited, he said, or conditions that pave the way for the palsy may be transmitted.

The research, done over an eight-year period at Hadassah-Hebrew University Hospital, Jerusalem, was reported in the *Archives of Neurology*, 8:557, 1963.

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MEDICINE

Lack of Light Causes Physical Change in Blind

► **LACK OF LIGHT** causes disturbances of metabolism and water retention, Dr. Johannes Fuchs of Stuttgart, West Germany, reported.

Dr. Fuchs showed pictures of blind harpists painted by Egyptian artists 3,500 years ago to demonstrate fatty degeneration and puffiness caused by disturbance of the endocrine glands in the sightless.

"It remained for our time and more modern methods of investigation to establish scientific proof of the connections between blindness and physical alterations which frequently accompany the loss of sight," the German ophthalmologist said at a meeting of the New York Academy of Sciences.

• *Science News Letter*, 84:22 July 13, 1963