

PUBLIC HEALTH

Need New Abortion Laws

The president of the Planned Parenthood-World Population Federation advocates revision of laws on legal abortion to include all aspects of the mother's health.

► THE HEALTH of mothers should be considered paramount and a reason for attempting to revise U.S. laws on legal abortion.

U.S. abortion laws should be broadened, not only to include the life but the health of the mother, Dr. Alan Guttmacher of New York City, president of Planned Parenthood-World Population, advocates.

A woman in the United States today may have a legal abortion only if her life, or the life of her baby is in danger. A few states also grant a legal abortion when the mother's health is in danger.

Predicting that California will be the first state to "modernize" its abortion laws, Dr. Guttmacher stressed a six-point revision of existing laws in a speech before the University of Southern California School of Medicine.

Abortion should be made legal when:

1. The mother's health as well as her life is threatened.
2. The unborn child may have defects due to heredity or maternal illness during pregnancy. For example, German measles during the first 12 weeks of pregnancy results in a 20 percent likelihood of deformity.
3. The mother is addicted to narcotics or alcohol, and is unable to properly care for the child.
4. The unborn child is a result of sex crimes or incest.

5. The child is being carried by an unwed girl under 18.

6. The family may be unable to support and care for another child.

An estimated one million illegal abortions are performed in the United States each year, Dr. Guttmacher said. He predicted that modification of the abortion laws as outlined would have little effect on this total figure.

Because illegal abortion lacks the proper medical care and safety insurances, it is the second leading cause of maternal death in the United States.

Every doctor someday faces the problem of abortion either in his practice or in his personal life, said Dr. Robert Sack, assistant clinical professor of obstetrics and gynecology at the University of Southern California and chief attending obstetrician at John Wesley Hospital, Los Angeles.

He categorized women seeking abortion under eight general types: a distraught mother and her unmarried daughter; a married woman whose husband is sterile; a divorcee; a widow; a married woman over 40; a relatively young married woman who already has more children than she and her husband want or can afford; a woman with a history of genetic defects; and the daughter of a friend.

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MEDICINE

Three Killer Diseases Seen Controlled in U.S.

► SCIENCE is making an all-out attack on heart disease, cancer and stroke, the three leading killers that take 70% of American lives today.

President Lyndon B. Johnson's commission on these diseases reported to him at the White House that it was "confident that the toll of these three diseases could in fact be sharply reduced now and in the immediate future."

A national network to care for patients, regardless of their ability to pay, and for research and teaching has been proposed. The report states:

"The sweep of scientific progress in the past decade has brought most forms of congenital heart disease within our powers of correction. Advances in surgery make it possible to save patients who would have been doomed five years ago; indeed, even one year ago. Rheumatic heart disease now can be virtually eliminated. Many strokes can be seen and prevented. Cancer of the cervix and uterus can be brought almost to the vanishing point, and chances are greatly improved for cure of cancer in other accessible sites."

Major legislation and nearly three billion dollars will be necessary to carry out the proposed national network all over this country. The report makes general recommendations for comprehensive revision of the Public Health Service and Vocational Rehabilitation Acts, and carries a strong recommendation for reorganization of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare to enable it to carry out more effective leadership and coordination of the program.

Some obstacles are seen in the probable attitude of organized medicine, Dr. Michael E. DeBakey, chairman of the commission and chairman of the department of surgery, Baylor University College of Medicine, Houston, Tex., said in answer to a question.

"If people get proper care, however," Dr. DeBakey said, "there will be no demand for socialized medicine." The report said its program of regional networks for medical care, research and teaching are an answer to socialized medicine.

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BIOTECHNOLOGY

Blood Typing Done By Automatic System

► AN AUTO-ANALYZER for routine blood grouping and typing has been put into use by the New York Red Cross Blood Center, which is the first in the country to install such an automated system.

Three technicians will be able to test more than 700 pints of blood in three shifts of a 24-hour period. This is one and a half times the amount that six technicians can now do in a working day.

The machine will not replace any technicians, but will free them for more complex tasks. The auto-analyzer can determine automatically A, B, AB and O blood groups, and Rh positive and negative blood types.

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American Red Cross

AUTOMATIC BLOOD TYPER—The Autoanalyzer, a new automated system for grouping and typing blood, is now in operation. Two hundred blood samples are inserted in the sampler at the right, processed through eight separate channels, measured by an electronic colorimeter, and the results recorded automatically on the graph at the left. Chief laboratory technician Carlton Goldstein demonstrates the procedure.