

# Loop Causes Problem

➤ SIX HONG KONG women wearing intrauterine devices have been reported having tubal pregnancies. In all six cases, the device used was the Lippes loop, which of late is being widely used in Hong Kong.

"It is far from our intention here to condemn the use of the I.U.D. (intrauterine device)," Drs. R. Ramkissoon-Chen and Kong Ta-Ko of Kwong Wah Hospital reported in the *British Medical Journal*, May 21, 1966. "We simply wish to state that ectopic pregnancies can occur in the presence of the I.U.D., and that they may pose a diagnostic problem."

An editorial in the same journal warns doctors to be on the alert for this diagnostic pitfall. An intrauterine device may cause pelvic pain and menstrual irregularity, at least when it is first worn. Unless the possibility of pregnancy in the fallopian tubes leading from the ovaries to the uterus is borne in mind, the doctor may decide that symptoms are due only to the I.U.D.

In one case, the Hong Kong doctors reported, a physician diagnosed

the pain as acute appendicitis. In others, the I.U.D. was simply removed, and there was a delay in surgery for the real cause.

It is not known just how the I.U.D. works, but it is commonly believed that it prevents implantation of the ovum. The Hong Kong doctors suggest that inasmuch as it did not interfere with fertilization of the ovum in the fallopian tube, it could act as a foreign body to stimulate uterine contractions, thus interfering with implantation in the womb.

As the name of the coil indicates, the intrauterine device appears to prevent intrauterine pregnancy but not pregnancy outside the womb. In the "occasional" cases of tubal pregnancy that occur in women prone to this condition, the I.U.D. obviously does not work.

"Clearly the occurrence of tubal pregnancy makes it unlikely that fertilization is prevented," the editorial concludes. Since surgery is necessary to remove the misplaced embryo, delay could be dangerous, although no deaths were reported among the six

women in Hong Kong. Evidence obtained from the study of monkeys and cattle, but not humans, suggests that the device is associated with rapid discharge of ova from the fallopian tubes. One researcher expressed the opinion that the I.U.D. interferes with conception at some stage between ovulation and implantation and that it does not act by dislodging embryos that have already been implanted.

• *Science News*, 89:489 June 18, 1966

## MEDICINE

### Breast Cancer Believed Prevented by Hormones

➤ FROM THE MENOPAUSE on, women should be treated with female hormones, a New York Medical College professor believes.

The cyclic administration of estrogen and progesterone may well offer a method of reducing the occurrence of breast and genital cancer as well as a means of keeping the mature woman young psychologically and physically, Dr. Henry P. Leis, clinical professor of surgery, reported.

Doctors have long disagreed over the controversial question of giving hormones to menopausal patients, chiefly because of possible cancer-causing effects.

After 10 to 14 years of treatment with female hormones of 158 women ranging from 38 to 54 years at the start, Dr. Leis said none developed cancer of the breast or genital organs and all were spared the climacteric symptoms and harmful metabolic effects of the menopause.

Of 36 women who had had surgical menopause, 29 had had both ovaries and uterus removed. Seventeen of the 158 patients had a family history of breast cancer.

Dr. Leis reported his findings in *International Surgery*, May 1966.

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## GENERAL SCIENCE

### Drug Promotion Costs \$800 Million a Year

➤ UP TO \$800 million a year is spent by the drug industry in "a tremendous total effort . . . to influence doctors and patients," U.S. Food and Drug Administration Commissioner James L. Goddard said.

Last year, ethical drug advertising in professional and mass audience medical journals amounted to \$74.6 million, Dr. Goddard told the Federal Bar Association's Briefing Conference on Federal Controls of Advertising and Promotion. Direct-mail promotion accounted for about another \$48.2 million. Another \$144 million went into advertising and promotion on network television by manufacturers of over-the-counter drugs.

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Mount Sinai

**CANCER PRODUCER**—X-rays of lungs that have been exposed to asbestos dust are being examined by Dr. Irving J. Selikoff, foreground, and Dr. Jacob Churg, both of Mount Sinai Hospital in New York. Its new Environmental Health Laboratory will examine "spill-over" of cancer-producing materials into the general population.