

# medical sciences

## PROSTHESES

### Plastic braces

Braces worn by many persons stricken with paralyzing illnesses are usually made of metal. In Israel, however, Dr. Gordon C. Robin of the Orthopedic Department of the Hadassah-Hebrew University Medical Center recently reported at the International Meeting of the Israel Surgical Society in Jerusalem that plastic materials have numerous advantages, including lightness.

With the help of Israel Aeronautic Industries Ltd., Dr. Robin has produced a simple plastic double-upright, below-knee brace that has been successfully used for three years. It is 40 percent lighter than a standard aluminum brace and about 20 percent cheaper. Its life is somewhat shorter than that of a metal brace, but once the original mold is made it is easy enough to reproduce the brace quickly and cheaply.

The plastic materials are much easier to work with and lighter than leather, so they are suitable for body appliances such as congenital hip splints, spinal braces and other uses.

The success of Dr. Robin's brace has led to the use of the same laminated polyester for a knee-stabilizing brace, and here, the material has allowed for a weight reduction from 1,000 grams in a standard brace to 100 for the plastic type.

## ECTOPIC PREGNANCY

### Preserving fertility

Many childless women have been deprived of motherhood because their obstetricians belonged to the school that advocates removal of the fallopian tube, where most ectopic pregnancies occur.

The radical-surgery procedure has been questioned in recent years, Dr. Jack G. Hallatt of the Kaiser Foundation Hospital in Los Angeles points out in the December issue of the professional journal, *POSTGRADUATE MEDICINE*.

When the tube is not removed, Dr. Hallatt estimates, there is a six in seven chance of the woman having a normal baby in a subsequent pregnancy.

Analyzing 561 cases of ectopic pregnancy seen at the hospital during a 21-year period, Dr. Hallatt reports that more than half of the women had not suspected they were pregnant and only 14 percent had missed a menstrual period.

Pain was a symptom in 97 percent of the cases, and if diagnosis is delayed long enough it is present in 100 percent of patients.

Dr. Hallatt says that an attempt to preserve the involved tube is justified and that it is essential if reproductive capacity is to be preserved.

## PROCTOLOGY

### Simple treatments

First aid for small hemorrhoids or thrombosed piles is recommended by a surgeon at the Medical College of South Carolina.

The typical moderately sized thrombus without inflammation can be removed in a few minutes in the

doctor's office, Dr. Leon Banov Jr. told a group of proctologists at the recent clinical meeting of the American Medical Association in Miami Beach, Fla. The treatment does not remove the hemorrhoid, but it does give quick relief in many cases.

Another proctologist, Dr. C. C. Chewing of the Medical College of Virginia, has been using quinine and urea hydrochloride as a hardening agent in the treatment of bleeding internal hemorrhoids.

Dr. Chewing and his associate, Dr. Robert Terrell, found that 95 percent of 75 patients who received the injection "had no further loss of blood" after only one treatment.

Dr. Banov complains of the "majestic indifference" of many doctors to the study of the anorectum, and, as a remedy, suggests the slogan: "Every patient has a rectum, every doctor can examine it."

## PREGNANCY

### Starch and clay as food

It is traditional that pregnant women have peculiar food habits. But two dietary aberrations preferred by some women, clay and laundry starch, can have deleterious effects.

A study of 61 indigent women, mostly from the South, showed 16 percent ate starch and another 7 percent ate clay, reports Dr. Joseph R. Swartwout of the Pritzker School of Medicine of the University of Chicago. He was aided by M. Bertha Brandt, nutritionist at the Chicago Lying-in Hospital.

The study was stimulated by Miss Brandt's discovery that starch was a frequent food among women she interviewed routinely at the hospital. The fad is not restricted to poor people, she says.

Most of the clay eaters favor the white Georgia kaolin, but a few are partial to the light pink or light blue clay found in other Southern states. They have their favorite clay shipped in.

Dr. Swartwout says that clay contains no calories, which might seem to be desirable for weight-watchers. It passes through the body without being absorbed. It also reduces a person's capacity to consume other foods that contain much-needed proteins.

Laundry starch does contain calories in the form of carbohydrates. It gives a feeling of fullness, and the person skips essential nutrients.

## MUMPS

### Patients isolated too late

Mumps patients in hospitals are put in isolation to keep the disease from spreading. Apparently they are not isolated soon enough. The custom is to wait until the cheeks puff out, but by then the virus has already done its initial work, and the disease is contagious early in its course, says Dr. Philip A. Brunell of the New York University School of Medicine in the Dec. 19 *NEW ENGLAND JOURNAL OF MEDICINE*.

The reason for the round-faced appearance of the mumps is that the parotid gland becomes inflamed. This gland, at the angle of the jaw in front of and below the ear, secretes saliva into the mouth.

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