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BIOCHEMISTRY

Hormone Saves Babies From Too Early Birth

➤ A HORMONE DRUG to save babies from being born too early to survive has been developed.

The drug, called Releasin, is a form of the female hormone relaxin discovered in 1925 by Dr. Frederick L. Hisaw of Harvard. Conversion of the hormone into a useful drug was accomplished by Dr. Robert L. Kroc and associates of Warner-Lambert Pharmaceutical Company's laboratories at Morris Plains, N. J.

The drug is expected to be in short supply for "the next few years," and is costly, "upward of \$150 to \$175 for each case" treated at first.

The drug was given to 40 women with premature labor in a study by the late Dr. Clair E. Folsome, and Drs. Theodore Harami, Stanley R. Lavietes and George M. Massell of Flower and Fifth Avenue Hospitals and the Metropolitan Medical Center, New York.

The premature labor was completely halted in 23. Frequency and intensity of contractions were lessened in 15. Labor was held off long enough, with consequent gain in time in the womb for the babies, to permit the ultimate delivery of 27 normal infants.

A control group of 50 patients in premature labor was treated by conventional methods of absolute bed rest, good sedation, and a high-protein, high-vitamin diet. From these, only seven babies were saved.

The hormone preparation acts by relaxing the ligaments that bind together the two halves of the pelvis, and by causing the tissues of the birth canal and uterus to soften and dilate. In cases of premature birth, this relaxing and softening effect is often not present. Consequently, even though uterine contractions may be strong, it may take so long for the premature baby to be delivered it dies before or at birth.

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