

Ann B. Pammel

Hank's Memos
~~SEE~~ JAN 18

Memorandum

Please return

Research in the Hygiene of Pregnancy, Lactation, and Menopause.

As one field in which the Memorial might undertake to make a substantial contribution to the welfare of women and children, the promotion of a research project in the field of gynecology may be suggested. It is acknowledged by almost everyone that there is little or nothing known about the hygiene of pregnancy and that in general the obstetricians are not interested. In view of the fact that in the United States the mortality rate in connection with child birth is much higher than in most other civilized countries, it is obvious that this would ^{not} be an unpromising field to develop. It may be added that the research in this problem would not be a medical project so much as a problem in physiology and biochemistry, since the aim would be to discover what factors contributed to, or detracted from, a successful termination of pregnancy in normal delivery of a viable infant. The practice among obstetricians today, in so far as they pay any attention to the health and comfort of the pregnant woman, is highly diverse and empirical, so much so, that scarcely any two physicians are in agreement in their advice to their patients.

Directly related to the hygiene of pregnancy is the problem of lactation. It is generally, although not unanimously, considered that breast feeding is a factor of considerable importance in the health of children both as infants and in later years, but here again the practice of obstetricians who have the initial control and of pediatricians is almost wholly empirical. There is good reason to suppose that with the newer methods of research in biochemistry and particularly in nutrition, a very considerable advance could be effected in this field through well organized research and that a large contribution to infant welfare would accordingly be made.

Another field for research which might contribute considerable

to the happiness of women is in the physiology of the menopause. So far as can be ascertained by casual inquiry practically nothing is known about derangement of functioning during the menopause in which the most intense suffering is frequently experienced. It is not too much to expect that considerable light might be thrown on the hygiene of women during this period which would reduce, if not eliminate in large part, the pain and suffering now generally experienced.

In suggesting these three fields for research it is not believed that any short and simple procedure will suffice but rather that a fairly large undertaking for a series of years would be necessary to produce any significant results. This field, therefore, might offer an opportunity for the Memorial to do something on a fairly large scale for the welfare of women and children. As indicated above this would not be, strictly speaking, medical research since the aim would be not to discover methods for curing pathological conditions but rather to work out the methods which would conduce to health and better function. Mr. Embree of the Foundation, believes that there would be no conflict with the work of the Foundation or of the Institute should the Memorial undertake to do anything in this field, and in his opinion this might be a highly appropriate undertaking for the Memorial. It is obvious that the advice and cooperation of the Foundation should be sought in planning such a project. It should be further noted that the studies in this field would require the cooperation of women on a fairly large scale, which would not be impossible to obtain since groups of women could be enlisted in the experiments through the mothercraft clubs, pre-natal clinics, child study groups and various and sundry other women's organizations. This participation in experiments on diet, exercise and so forth would in itself be a highly interesting project to start among women generally and it would contribute no little to the education of the medical profession.

*I can't
speak for
the Institute
self*