

A. KAPLAN

OBSTETRICS AND GYNECOLOGY

A TEXTBOOK FOR NURSES

FOREIGN LANGUAGES PUBLISHING HOUSE
Moscow

TRANSLATED FROM THE RUSSIAN BY DAVID A. MYSHNE

А. Л. КАПЛАН

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CHAPTER I

OBSTETRIC SERVICES IN THE U.S.S.R.

In general the term gynecology (Greek: gynaikos—woman, logos—discourse) means the science dealing with woman. In its narrow sense, gynecology is the branch of medicine which deals with the physiology and pathology of the nonpregnant female organism, the physiology and pathology of the female genitalia, and the methods of prevention and rational treatment of female diseases. Obstetrics, on the other hand, deals with the peculiarities and changes in the female organism connected with pregnancy, development of the fetus, labour and puerperium, as well as methods of preventing complications and administering rational aid during pregnancy, labour and puerperium to the mother and the newborn.

The striving to help the woman in labour and to bring her relief during these difficult moments is quite natural, hence, rudiments of obstetrics can be traced back to antiquity. In the beginning obstetric aid was rendered by women who had themselves given birth to children; subsequently some of these women made this aid their occupation, thus giving rise to midwifery. For many centuries parturient women were aided by ignorant midwives whose practice was based mainly on prejudices and superstitions. The midwives gave the parturient women steam baths, hung them up by the legs, kneaded their abdomens, "corrected" the babies' heads, tightly swaddled the babies "so that they may not have crooked legs" and did a number of other harmful things.

Before the second half of the 18th century obstetrics did not exist in Russia as a branch of medicine at all.