



SEPTEMBER 1963

# PELVIC PAIN

*Edited by*

**J. P. GREENHILL, M.D.**



HOEBER MEDICAL DIVISION

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# CLINICAL OBSTETRICS AND GYNECOLOGY

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## **PRENATAL CARE**



## FOREWORD

IN THE YEAR 1963 the birth of a baby is still a monumental physiologic event.

Maternal hazards in childbirth have decreased drastically, with the short period of the last 30 years seeing maternal mortality in the United States reduced by nearly 95 per cent. There has likewise been a tremendous decline in irreparable trauma and disease associated with human reproduction. But although the finality of death is easy to record, it is not as simple to evaluate the frequency and extent of maternal damage, which may shorten life or reduce the pleasures of living.

Not as spectacular has been our progress in diminishing perinatal wastage; this has changed little in the recent past. Enlightened prenatal care favors the normal growth and development of the baby when the mother is healthy and has normal reproductive organs, and it seeks out maternal deficiencies, correcting those that are amenable to therapy, while safeguarding mother and baby from those that cannot be removed. Faulty maternal environment may have its origins long before conception, in congenital defects, or in disease acquired before or after marriage.

Though basic requirements of mothers-to-be remain constant, and though we are alert for pregnancy complications, new patterns of prenatal care constantly evolve with new knowledge and the changing needs of patients. For instance, greater emphasis is now given to the patients' emotional wants. For the birth of the baby is a colossal psychology as well as physiologic event in its parents' lives. Modern obstetrics adjusts to this realization.

In no medical specialty is the concept of prevention more vital than in the treatment of the pregnant patient. In fact, prenatal counselling should begin long before pregnancy. Facts concerning the formation and function of the reproductive organs should be included in the education of every adolescent. Sex has been a taboo word long enough. The ignorance of youth coupled with youth's innate curiosity cause many of today's medical and sociologic problems.

Specific training for potential parents should start early in the wife's pregnancy, and should contain facts sufficient to emphasize that giving birth is a normal female function and a special female privilege. In this regard, preparation-for-labor classes help enormously. It is also wise for the patient to obtain one of the current prenatal booklets, which

will answer many of the questions that arise daily during pregnancy. Although these booklets may take some of the load from the shoulders of the busy doctor, it is this same doctor who assumes the role of physician, friend, and confidant, and is the person to whom the mother-to-be turns for information, guidance, and emotional support.

The goals of modern maternity care can be briefly summarized as follows:

1. Maintaining optimal physical fitness so that the mother may provide for her own increasing needs as well as for the normal growth and development of her baby.
2. Safeguarding the mother from the complications of pregnancy.
3. Fostering emotional well-being to promote the patient's health and that of her child.
4. Preparation for a safe, interesting, and rewarding delivery.

The contributions of the distinguished authors who have been selected to participate in our symposium should help the physician meet these goals. The editor wishes to thank them for their enthusiastic cooperation and help in presenting this seminar.

M. EDWARD DAVIS, M.D.

# THE PREMARITAL EXAMINATION

DANIEL G. MORTON, M.D.

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THE PREMARITAL EXAMINATION has not been given as wide recognition as the prenatal examination, and consequently is not widely practiced today. Indeed, the premarital examination has not even been clearly defined. Often it has consisted of nothing more than taking a blood specimen for a required serologic test for syphilis, plus contraceptive advice, or these two matters in addition to necessary attention to an intact hymen. But ideally, the premarital examination should encompass much more than this.

Its several objectives might be stated as below.

1. To discover, and correct if possible, physical conditions which might have a deleterious effect upon the marriage, and/or childbearing.
2. To provide pertinent information for the prospective bride and groom regarding the anatomy and physiology of the reproductive organs and of other matters of sexology when such information is lacking.
3. To provide information on the achievement and control of conception.
4. A further objective might be provision of counsel regarding ancillary matters: consanguinity, marked disparity in ages, difference in races, difference in religions, living with the in-laws, and such problems.

It is perfectly possible to achieve the first three of these objectives with relatively little disruption of the present examination routine. The fourth objective would require more time than either the average couple or the average physician is prepared to give today. In addition, the idea of the physician's including such counsel as part of his premarital examination does not yet have wide acceptance; it would have to be "sold" to the public before it could be generally applied.

Actually, most young men and women contemplating marriage today are healthy enough, and most are well enough informed, to escape the calamities which might befall them if they were truly deficient physically, or if they were completely uninformed about sexual matters. Certainly



many of our young people have had some sort of physical examination in connection with high school, college, or other programs, long before the question of marriage arises; and they therefore have some knowledge of their physical deficiencies, if such exist. This probably explains why a complete premarital examination in the sense outlined above has not been considered as essential, or even desirable, as yet. Possibly physicians have contributed to this unsatisfactory state of affairs by not grasping the opportunities which presented themselves when couples approaching marriage consulted them for contraceptive advice only, or for surgical incision of the hymen and nothing more. They may not have appreciated the possible value of a more complete course in premarital preparation. There can be little doubt that premarital examination of both prospective husband and wife is of great value in helping the couple to avoid many of the developments which lead to marital discord and, sometimes, to divorce.

The present writer believes that it is quite clear that ignorance and immaturity in sexual matters are responsible for a very sizable share of marital discord. It is the opportunity to inform, interpret, and correct—and this at a most propitious time—that makes the premarital examination so potentially valuable. Such a brief contact cannot, of course, accomplish miracles; it cannot always undo an established habit of mind or controvert an erroneous idea; it cannot change natures; it cannot impart enough information to entirely obviate the problems which develop in the course of a marriage. It can, however, remove many fears, accurately portray what is to be expected sexually, and assist in suggesting the right approaches. It is the author's presumption in this short essay to outline a program which is practicable within the time of one, two, or three office visits, and which is as consistent with the four objectives set forth above as possible. Moreover, requirements may vary greatly, according to the individual instance, and there need be no rigidity even as to the exact content of such an examination, nor the exact number of visits required.

#### BASIC ELEMENTS OF THE EXAMINATION

Premarital examinations, however, should involve both the prospective husband and wife, and the following elements should be included:

1. A review of physical resources with special emphasis upon conditions which might affect marriage and/or childbearing.
2. A review of the couple's knowledge of the basic anatomy and physiology of the reproductive organs.