

Australian Birth Control to go on Trial in India

Adrienne Jones

A natural birth control system devised by an Australian neurologist four years ago may soon be widely used throughout India.

Doctors from India were in Australia studying the system in detail before returning to introduce it in trial areas.

The system, known as The Ovulation Method, is being evaluated by the World Health Organisation as potentially the most promising of natural birth control methods as a means of containing world population.

It has been adopted in 36 countries, including the United States and Guatemala, and is to be introduced on a trial basis by the World Health Organisation in three centres in India.

The Indian doctors in Australia studying the new system were all nuns—Sister Catherine Bernard of the Leonard Hospital, Batlagundu, Madurai District formerly the officer-in-charge of the Family Planning Centre at Bangalore; Sister Elsie Vadkumcherry, an obstetrician and gynaecologist at the Carmel Hospital, Alwaye, Kerala; and Sister Perpetua, Director of the Family Planning Centre, Vijayawada Diocese, and a medical officer at St. Anne's Hospital, Vijayawada.

The doctors were studying the Ovulation Method at St. Margaret's Hospital for Women, Sydney, New South Wales, and other Catholic Family Life Centres, and had a plan to study it in Melbourne, Victoria, also under the guidance of the originator of the system, neurologist Dr. John Billings, a prominent Australian physician and Dean of the clinical school at St. Vincent's Hospital.

Sister Perpetua, who met Dr. Billings during his visit to India in January, already has experience of the Ovulation Method at the Family Planning Centre in Vijayawada

Diocese, where about 330 women have been counselled in its use since 1973.

Sister Perpetua said she had found the new method, which basically depends on a woman calculating her ovulation period by noticing changes in cervical mucus—much easier than other natural contraceptive methods and much better accepted even by illiterate people. Because it was also inexpensive, it was an ideal system for use in India not only as a method of birth control, but also as a means of spacing families.

Sister Perpetua was particularly interested in exchanging views with a visiting Mexican doctor, Dr. Maria de la Luz Perales, who said she had been asked by the Mexican President, Mr. Luis Echeverria, to introduce the system into Mexico.

"We've been particularly interested to hear of the experience they've had with this method so far in Mexico—even there, where the people are very illiterate, they've been following it very successfully," Sister Perpetua said.

"Conditions in the two countries were similar and the Ovulation Method would probably be as successful on a wider basis in India."

"If the instructions are followed the method is 100 per cent reliable. But it's not enough just to explain the system once. This is one of our problems. We don't have the follow-up resources. But if we could train enough people—social workers and dedicated women—to go out into the villages and homes explaining the system to the women and give follow-up counselling, there would not be too many difficulties. It would be a most important development for India."

Sister Perpetua said she believed this would be the next step after the initial step of training staff to operate the W.H.O. trial centres, and training them, in turn to train others as counsellors.

60 Years Ago—(Contd. f. p. 289) possible to live there, the two branches of the Order of St. John formed themselves into a religious body and dedicated themselves to Christ and the poor. Their dress then was black with a white cross of eight points embroidered on it on the left side. We call this cross the Maltese cross but not many people know that in its old signification each point of the cross stood for a special virtue or beatitude: 1. Spiritual happiness. 2. Avoid malice. 3. Sorrow for Sin. 4. Humility towards persecutors. 5. To practise Justice. 6. To practise mercy. 7. Sincerity and pureness of heart. 8. Willingness to suffer persecution. Later on the Order became military and combined the duties of caring for the sick with that of fighting for a good cause. It was divided afterwards into 1. The Knights, Members of noble families. 2. the Priests, 3. the Serving Brothers. The fame of the Order became so widespread through their valour and good works that members of the nobility flocked to serve under the White Cross Banner—The Banner of St. John.

The Red Cross Knights also at one time, 1119 A.D., well known. They were called Knights Templars also because they lived near the Temple in Jerusalem. Their duty was to guide and guard pilgrims through the difficult mountain passes on their way. The significance of the Red Cross is that they must be ready to shed their blood in defence of the faith.

The nurses going now to serve in the war are succeeding to this noble inheritance of association with good deeds. Their trained skill is doubtless greater, but their zeal and devotion cannot be greater than that of those who wore the eight-pointed cross old.

KARNATAKA TO ARRANGE ORIENTATION PROGRAMME

According to a notification issued by the the Director, Health Services, Karnataka, an orientation course will be arranged for all the Lady Health Visitors and Auxilliary Midwives before they are employed under the Multipurpose Workers Scheme scheduled to be introduced shortly in the state.