

NEONATOLOGY— The Care for the Newborn Infant

**The newborn infant arrives naked, wet
and partially asphyxiated**

ONE among ten children born in India in a given moment will not see the first birthday. Or, two million children among an estimated 21 million born every year, were doomed to die, half of them during the first month after birth, that is, in the neonatal period. In view of these statistics, the concept of a small family, so vital to meeting the objectives of the family planning programme, is of vital importance. The aim of the family planning programme in India is not merely to reduce the birth rate but also to provide services to improve the chances of a small family to survive, with all its children growing up to be healthy adults. The family planning programme is by far not restricted to the unborn. Neonatology, or the care of the newborn infant, is as much part and parcel of this programme as it is of maternal and child health services.

The WHO conducted an Orientation Course in Neonatology early this year. Attention was focussed, in a panel discussion, on the need to co-operate and co-ordinate the hospital and community health services in the development of neonatology for care and after-care of the new-born infant as well as for providing facilities for teaching and research in these aspects of maternal and child health.

Objectives

The objectives of neonatology are primarily the following :—

- (1) to enable the infant to be born healthy ;
- (2) to enable the infant to remain healthy and develop normally ;

- (3) to recognise and treat abnormalities ; and

- (4) to organise a service and teaching for care of normal and abnormal infants and for academic departments to organise research.

Courses in neonatology must aim at instructing the participants in the various methods applied in practice. First, knowledge has to be acquired regarding foetal development, changes in foetal environment which cause pathology, the mechanism of labour and delivery and their effect on the foetus, the adaptation of the newborn to independent existence and the physiology of the newborn infant and assessment of normality. Paediatricians must learn to meet the needs of the newborn infants.

The Needs

The newborn infant arrives naked, wet and partially asphyxiated into the air of a delivery room where the temperature even in tropical countries is often likely to be considerably below that of the mother (37—37.5°C). Heat is, therefore, lost rapidly unless avoided by special precautions. But in addition to the environmental needs of the newborn infant such as warmth, there are other needs to be observed such as nutritional needs. Much attention must be paid to the feeding of infants as many mothers require considerable help especially in the establishment of breast-feeding. Damage by infection is another danger which has to be avoided as this damage can be fatal at this tender age. Supportive measures have to be

taken for inadequate adaptive mechanisms such as renal, hepatic, respiratory and metabolic. WHO's neonatology courses outlines methods of recognition and treatment of abnormalities in the "normal" infant as well as in the abnormal foetus and newborn. In all these WHO assisted courses emphasis is finally placed on the organization for care and instruction.

THE CONCEPT OF SATISFACTION

By Miss V. Narain Das

P.H.N. Student

WE come in contact with all kinds of people in the community.

All of them do not openly show apprehensions and anxiety for disease. Some patients even reject treatment, refuse to accept suggestions and are in no mood to co-operate.

Emotions play a vital part in any illness. Emotional disturbance can easily upset the therapeutic measures and therefore, the nursing skills must be combined with an understanding of the patient as a whole.

To make our work among these people smooth we must understand and accept them emotionally as well as intellectually, with all their neurotic tendencies, different backgrounds, and their philosophy of life.

In these circumstances we must show restraint and try to appreciate the rights and needs of other people. We must know that people (whether physically or mentally ill are reassured, comforted and cured not by words and actions (treatment) alone but by the unconscious attitude of acceptance which speaks much louder. We must understand that the degree of happiness or the state of mental health each individual will be able to achieve is directly related to the

(Contd. on page 182)