

A CHALLENGE TO THE NURSE

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(Reprinted from THE AMERICAN JOURNAL OF NURSING, October, 1935)

Dr. Exner's article on 'The Prevention of Prenatal Syphilis' should prove a challenge to every nurse, as should the graph on this page.

The nurse, herself, must learn the facts concerning syphilis; its prevention, treatment, cure, and appreciate in part at least the significance of it all.

Nurses should know that a woman who is pregnant should have a complete physical examination by a competent doctor as early in pregnancy as is possible, and that regular follow-up supervision and care is necessary to both the mother and her baby; that where a positive Wassermann is found, or where the findings in the examination suggest a questionable condition, both husband and wife should be examined; that repeated examinations are necessary, for sometimes only by diligently searching can this disease be found; that complete histories of both partners is of the utmost importance; and that syphilis is a communicable disease and like other communicable diseases may be contracted at any time. The nurse should also know that many husbands may know more about this disease than their wives do and the nurse should appeal to the husband to aid his wife in protecting their unborn baby.

Women of necessity have to bear the ills and discomforts associated with pregnancy, but husbands can do much to lessen these burdens by co-operating in every way possible. That fathers and mothers want to protect their children's health is evidenced by the large numbers of parents who register their babies very early after birth with a physician or a health station which they visit regularly.

If these same parents understood that care during all of pregnancy is as important, or perhaps more so, because it can prevent their children from suffering, they would make this same effort to care for their baby throughout pregnancy.

The public health nurse, whose contacts more often include the whole family, perhaps has the greater opportunity to teach this preventive care. She meets the patient and her husband in their own home and is their friend and adviser. Here they may ask questions without being intruded upon, worries may more easily be explained away, and the value of preventive care can be explained with less effort. Private duty nurses have teaching opportunities, too. Teaching parents the reason for very early prenatal examination and care throughout pregnancy appears to be the keynote in preventive care. It will take the concentrated effort of doctors and nurses working together to achieve this end.

Syphilitic patients are now being treated in the skin and medical clinic of some hospitals. The name does much to remove the difficulties when referring patients for care. Doctors and nurses would probably gain the interest and co-operation of wives and their husbands to a greater degree if they would take them into their confidence more than they now do. Mothers need to be protected and encouraged, and fathers need to be acquainted with the facts of this care. Syphilis is said to be passed on to babies through the mother—but it is quite possible that the disease may be contracted from the husband and given to the baby *via* the mother.

'The challenge consists in the opportunity to apply modern diagnostic and therapeutic measures to every pregnant woman. Thus the unborn baby is given an opportunity for life and health.'