

Experts Warn Against X-Rays in Early Pregnancy

New York—(Science Service)—X-rays should definitely be avoided during the early months of pregnancy, four experts warned here.

This means that they should be avoided whenever possible in at least the first three months, and there should be no such thing as "routine" X-rays.

Doctors should also pay more attention to pregnant patients who call them to say that they are going to visit the dentist. Dental surveys are usually recommended at this time, and obstetricians should be particularly on guard to prevent dental X-rays to the mouth from hitting the pelvic area. It has recently been discovered that one of the largest doses to the reproductive organs is received in the dental chair where 15 or 20 exposures are shot in a sitting position and the rays are directed downward towards the pelvis.

Drs. Martin L. Stone, Louis J. Salerno, Frank J. Borrelli, and Abner I. Weisman, all of the New York Medical College, listed the following known hazards of radiation:

1. Gross malformation in the fetus.
2. Subtle changes that are not immediately spotted such as the development of leukemia, other tumor-like abnormal growths, shortening of life, sterility, psychologic or mental defects, development of cataracts and increased susceptibility to disease.
3. Genetic damage and mutations which may not be apparent.

Dr. Salerno pointed out that geneticists advise no more than 10 roentgens to the reproductive organs during the first 30 years of life. Since natural radiation takes 4.3 of these roentgens, only 5.7 are left for medical, occupational and environmental doses.

Commenting upon the effects of X-rays to medical men, the problem of radiologists dying from leukemia at the rate of eight or 10 to one, as compared to other doctors, however, is probably not as accurate as at first appears, Dr. Borrelli explained. A large number of these deaths were found to be among physicians using X-rays in their practice, not qualified radiologists, he added. X-rays should be restricted to those who are qualified to use them.

That does not mean a restriction to radiologists, but, rather, that doctors in general practice should be qualified in the use of them not only for their own protection, but for the protection of the patient also, Dr. Salerno concluded.

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