

Epidemic Encephalitis and Pregnancy

BY

SIR ARTHUR J. HALL, M.D., D.Sc., F.R.C.P.

Emeritus Professor of Medicine, University of Sheffield.

IT is now well known that when acute epidemic encephalitis occurs during pregnancy, labour may be normal and the child in every way healthy; also that a woman suffering from chronic encephalitis can bear healthy offspring. The following case illustrates the truth of both of these statements, in a somewhat unusual way, in the same woman.

S.J.X¹ was married in August 1923, when 22 years of age. In April 1924, when 8 months pregnant, she had a severe attack of epidemic encephalitis, with delirium, diplopia and lethargy. A healthy female child was born at term on May 25th. Labour was normal. Soon after this, symptoms of Parkinsonism set in, and for the next 18 months the woman was bed-ridden. Salivation was very troublesome. Early in 1926 tincture of belladonna was prescribed in moderate doses. The improvement was rapid and marked, so that in a short time she was able to get up, and, gradually, to do her housework again. The salivation was completely controlled. From October 1926, when she first attended the Clinic at the Sheffield Royal Hospital, until 1940, her condition remained practically unchanged. She was a Parkinsonian in Stage 1. During these 14 years she attended regularly, and was taking one dram of tincture of belladonna daily. The rate of movement in her arms, as tested by the apparatus described in *The Lancet*, 1927, ii, 1009, had not deteriorated during 11 years. In 1927 it was 51 per cent in

the right arm and 44 per cent in the left arm. In 1938 it was still 51 per cent in the right arm and 42 per cent in the left arm. By this date the daughter (see Plate), born within a month of the mother's acute attack, had grown into an exceptionally big fine young woman. In August 1940, the mother became pregnant again, and gave birth to a healthy male child at term on December 1st, 1940. Labour was easy; the child weighed 6½ pounds. There was complete absence of lactation, owing to the fact that she had continued taking the same dose of belladonna throughout her pregnancy. The photograph, taken in October 1941, shows the Parkinsonian mother and her two children. The boy weighed 28 pounds at 10 months old. The mother has become rather more bent over, and is not able to do much housework, or nurse the child. The second pregnancy has activated the progress of the Parkinsonism, which has now reached Stage 2, that is she is partially dependent. Her condition to-day, September 1943, remains practically the same.

This case shows that a woman who has been Parkinsonian for 16 years may not only become pregnant, but that the gestation may be in every way normal, labour easy, the child healthy, and that it may not seriously advance the disease. Also, that not only can a daily dose of one dram of tincture of belladonna continue to give relief for 11 years without increase being needed, but that the taking of it through-

out gestation has no deleterious effect on the offspring. The only effect was the complete inhibition of lactation. This is only what one would expect, seeing the long-known use of the belladonna plaster to stop lactation. In this connexion, it is well to bear in mind that in persons taking one of the atropin group, the sweat is inhibited also, and that hyperpyrexia even of fatal issue may occur in such persons if exposed to hot sunshine. Astley Cooper² called attention to this danger, of which I have seen three or four cases among Parkinsonians. A similar hyperpyrexia may even occur when the dosage is only such as comes from belladonna plasters on the breasts. In 1911 I saw a woman with a

temperature of 105°F., which had followed sitting in the sun for some hours, while the plasters were on the breasts to check lactation. Although the pyrexia continued for some days during which she was very ill, she made a complete recovery.

REFERENCES.

1. This patient was recorded, as Case 10, in Appendix I of Frederick Roques' Monograph on "Epidemic Encephalitis in Association with Pregnancy, Labour and the Puerperium." (Sherratt and Hughes, Manchester, 1928.)
2. Astley Cooper. "The Mental Sequelae of Chronic Epidemic Encephalitis and their Prognosis." *Lancet*, 1936, ii, 677.