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Advances in
**Psychosomatic
Obstetrics
and Gynecology**

Edited by H.-J. Prill and M. Stauber



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Advances in Psychosomatic Obstetrics and Gynecology

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Co-Editor: P.G. Pechatschek

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Pregnancy as Latent Decision-Making Process: A Study of the Psychological and Social Determinants in Decision-Making

B. Wimmer-Puchinger, A. Beck, B. Dirisamer-Moser, and G. Scherer

Taking into consideration the large number of unwanted pregnancies in spite of the efforts of family planning organisations, the end of an early pregnancy can be understood especially when one sees the motives for this decision. This study aims at explaining the different values of a child under different circumstances in life, i.e., which social and psychological frame stipulations are experienced as an important condition of pregnancy.

Method

The problems of the individual background and social barriers were looked into by questioning two random groups of primiparae, those who carry the pregnancy to term and those who do not. For a better comprehension of the partner in the decision-making process the men were also interviewed. The tests were conducted via questionnaires and in-depth interviews by psychologists. The expectant mothers were interviewed 1 week before abortion. The questionnaires concerned socioeconomic, sociocultural interpersonal and intrapsychic dimensions, which are proved by attitude scales, as well as the actual conflicts and of course, contraceptive behavior, decision-making and a scale for depressive state (FPI).

Results

For this preliminary report we had data from 200 women. The average age of the expectant mothers was 22 years, which corresponds to the average first pregnancy age in Vienna. The average age of the abortion group was significantly lower (19). Furthermore the two groups differ significantly concerning their family status. Sixty-nine percent of the expectant mothers were married (at least 1 year), but only 15% of the abortion group. Eighty-nine percent of the expectant mothers were employed, but only 30% of the abortion group. Most of these women were either in vocational training or studying and were financially dependent upon their parents (89%). That means that our test group differs especially in the social determinants – earning their own money, being grown up, partner decision. These conflicts are typical for adolescence. Correspondingly the psychological determinants characteristic of this period, like self-conception, show significant results. The importance of profession for a woman is marked significantly higher by the abortion group. That one with a child is more dependent upon partner and family was scored higher in its negative consequences in the abortion group. Furthermore the women aborting had an ideal conception of a partner compared to their more negative attitude towards their current partner, whereas the women expecting had a more realistic assessment. The decision to abort was

made with their partners by 67% of our test group; 27% decided alone and 6% were forced. The motives and feelings showed that 63% of our abortion group feel that they could not handle the responsibility of a child at the time. 75% found aborting a very difficult path to take. This correlates with a high score on depression scales. Except the 20% planned pregnancies the groups did not show significant differences in their ambivalent feelings towards their decision and questioned the validity of their decision.

Discussion

Because this conflict is of great importance to be able to digest and integrate the ambivalent decision, one must take into consideration the socioeconomic conditions and intrapsychological dimensions concerned in accepting first pregnancies. The attitude towards motherhood was according to our results not stabilized at that age in our abortion group. Corresponding to the findings of Merz (1979) as well as our results, having an abortion in the adolescent period is an emotional burden. On the other hand our data showed a very labile contraceptive behavior. Both findings make clear that by psychohygienic respect there should be discussed family planning counselling as well as the offer of emotional support after abortion.

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Psychological and Personality Related Aspects in the Acceptance of the Rooming-in System

P. Kopecky, G. Heuser, H. Langanke, and E. Steinmeyer

Nearly all maternity wards offer the rooming-in system (RI) today. The good experiences made with it may bring up the opinion that only a "bad mother" would refuse RI. In order to ascertain whether RI can be recommended generally or whether certain personality structures might not be suitable for it, studies were made. A hundred and ten women received questionnaires for psychometric and standardized personality tests.

Advances in Psychosomatic Obstetrics and Gynecology

The major scientific and clinical advances in psychosomatic obstetrics and gynecology achieved in recent years are outlined in this book. It contains edited versions of selected contributions to the **6th International Congress for Psychosomatic Obstetrics and Gynecology**, held in Berlin in September, 1980.

Primary emphasis is placed on the problems of the young mother, women in the postgenerative phase, and early mother-child relationships.

Other topics considered include rooming-in and breast feeding, contraception, the premenstrual syndrome, psychosomatic aspects of cancer, psychiatric and psychological aspects of obesity, and unwanted pregnancy.

Gynecological symptoms and diseases are approached psychosomatically in the contributions made by various authors.

