

Drug use in pregnancy puts babies at risk

By Shirlee Rosen ide
staff writer

"My mother was a guinea pig, and now I'm afraid of getting cancer or not being able to have children."

If that sounds like a line from an afternoon soap, it's not. The words are those of a young resident in a Southfield Eccentric story several years ago.

Twenty-three years earlier, her mother had taken special care to give her daughter life. Her doctor prescribed a hormone (DES) said to prevent miscarriage. The result — a nightmare of fear about abnormal cells or malignancies in the offspring, not uncovered for years afterward. The story of DES damage continues.

Diethylstilbestrol (DES) is a synthetic hormone which was given to women conceiving children from 1941 to 1971. It put them in the center of a medical problem that shadowed their babies, especially daughters, from birth.

Women whose mothers took DES have developed ovarian cysts, pregnancy problems and cancer. Some risk to DES sons has also been documented.

THE FEDERAL Drug Administration (FDA) banned DES for use with pregnant women in 1971. Researchers estimate half of the 1.3 million DES daughters in the United States will suffer effects of their mothers' having taken the hormone.

Yet DES is just one small example of a complex dilemma that faces pregnant women in our society today, according to Greg Helm and Richard Cook, Providence pharmacists who both hold doctorates in their field.

Damage to unborn children, from maternal smoking, drinking, and use of drugs, both prescription and social, was a topic of Providence Hospital's 10th annual perinatal nursing seminar "Risks, Reality and Rewards" recently. "Pregnant women have to trust their doctors," said Helm, a seminar speaker. "We know that high fevers cause Spina Bifida (incomplete closure of the spine) so we treat pregnant women with fevers with Tylenol, known to be safe."

"Aspirin is far more controversial at this point."

Originally from Flint, Helm lives in Auburn Hills and is now completing a one year residency at the Southfield hospital. He explains that pharmacy is a changing profession with far more patient contact than once was customary.

HELM says the central issue regarding substances used during pregnancy is for physicians to be informed and to be able to make decisions weighing risk versus benefit.

As many as 65 percent of pregnant women took non-prescription drugs and prescribed medications according to studies done five and six years ago, he points out.

And thousands continue to smoke and use alcohol and an array of illegal substances as well.

For expectant women and their offspring, the first trimester and the last are the most critical.

The first three months, the embryo develops into a fetus and baby; and the last three months is preparation time for delivery, Helm explained. "The problem is, during the first three months women don't even know they're pregnant for half that time and we're still relatively ignorant of fetal development."

"When you think of birth defects, you think of the physical, but more and more we recognize they can be chemical or behavioral. While it's easy to see a physical deformity, you can't see hyperactivity or attention deficit disorders."

SMOKING AND DRINKING by pregnant women are known to be damaging to the unborn child, with fetal alcohol syndrome causing physical changes in the ears, eyes, and nose.

Physicians now label drinking during pregnancy a cause of congenital heart disease and decreased head size.

"Not all babies have the same degree of symptoms," said Cook.

With the pregnant woman drinking quite moderately, studies have demonstrated that 4-year-old offspring may have a diminished attention span.

"If a mother smokes, her baby will

weigh five to nine ounces less at birth," said Cook. "That's not so important at term, but if she delivers early, it becomes critical."

Helm said, "Smoking does increase early fetal death."

One study indicates that heavy use of caffeine increases spontaneous abortion. "But with caffeine, ignorance is bliss," said Cook.

"We know much too little. My wife says that chocolate makes the baby hyperactive. She changes to carob during pregnancy."

RESEARCH by physicians and groups of physicians goes on across the nation, linking effects of drugs on pregnancy.

"The biggest point," said Helm, "is that no drug in our level of technology is 100 percent safe, but we have to consider the benefits versus the risks."

On a positive note, Cook says that recent studies reveal that there is progress being made in the attempt to convince teens of the negatives of smoking. "Fewer teens are starting up with smoking," he said. "And only cocaine use is on the increase among illegal substances."

For the pregnant mother, many questions remain unanswered as research continues and drugs are tested for safety. "In order to link a drug and a defect, scientists need very large population studies," Helm said.

"And sometimes a pregnant mother has taken more than one drug which

can muddy the waters and make studies difficult."

A roadblock in scientific study, he added, is that many drugs are perfected with animal studies. "Those results can't always be extrapolated with women," he said.

COOK expects researchers to use their advanced techniques on human cells and human skin which can now be grown in laboratories.

"We can grow skin, human cells, even kidney cells," he explains. "We have the techniques to get going in this direction."

Considering the array of choices to be made and all the gray areas, when a woman learns she is pregnant, she should avoid smoking, caffeine, and over the counter drugs of all kinds.

"Patients need to approach pregnancy with knowledge," Cook emphasized. "Fetal alcohol syndrome is the most significant source of mental retardation affecting about one-third of the offspring if mother drinks."

"Ask your pharmacist, ask your doctor, ask the experts when you have questions or doubts. And if you don't know who to ask, call the nearest hospital drug information center."

Prize money donated for history contest

Farmington Area Arts Commission has given a cash donation to the Farmington Historical Society to be used, along with society funds, for prize money in the Lee S. Peel Historical Research Contest.

The contest is for those of all ages who wish to submit entries of any common format, audio, visual, or written material concerning original research in Farmington history.

The emphasis is on material concerning day-to-day life, material which is easily lost to future generations, but which, if preserved, presents a historical record of real life situa-

tions. Recollections of family and friends are especially sought since no other record may exist.

Entries will continue to be accepted through May 1.

The entries are to be mailed to Lee S. Peel Historical Research Contest, 33309 Shiawassee, Farmington 48024.

The winners will be announced during the society's annual dinner meeting, scheduled for May 17.

Cash prizes range from "best in age category," of \$25, to "first overall" which is \$100.

Inquiries will be taken by Nancy Leonard, 476-4125.

club circuit

ZETA ALPHA ALUMNAE CHAPTER of Delta Omicron International Music Fraternity meets at 3 p.m. Sunday in the Dearborn home of Mary Condit. Reservations are necessary, taken by Ellen Wagner, 542-1025.

Music for the afternoon will be furnished by Robert Vot, accompanied by Mary May.

WOMEN'S EXCHANGE meets at 6 p.m. Monday, Feb. 25, in Topinka's Country House in Southfield. Guest speaker for the evening is Ellen Elchbaum, a motivational speaker, who will give a step-by-step approach to conquering challenges.

The exchange is a network for career-oriented women sponsored by Western Wayne YWCA which draws its members from throughout southern Michigan. Guests are welcome to attend the dinner meeting by calling Candice Kidd, at the Y, 561-4110, for reservations before Feb. 22. Cost for guests is \$16.

MOONDUSTERS meet for a dance party at 9 p.m. Saturday Livonia Activities Center, corner of Farmington Road and Five Mile.

Admission is \$5, at the door, which includes dancing to a live band and refreshments. The event is open to all singles over the age of 40 in all surrounding communities.

FARMINGTON HILLS SENIOR ADULT CENTER hosts firefighter Mike Garr who will talk about the city's smoke detector program at noon Tuesday, Feb. 26, in the seniors' meeting place in Merce Center complex on 11 Mile Road, through Gate 4 east of Middlebelt Road.

Wind Baggers proceed in competition

Four Wind Baggers have won speaking contests in club competition and now proceed, representing the club, in competition with other Toastmaster club winners in the area.

Speech contest winners are Jane Shuster of Farmington and Sam Poma of Detroit. The runner-up was Paul Burr of Livonia.

Evaluation contest winners were Alfred Hajjar of Farmington and Richard Fialle of Canton. This was Hajjar's second win. Last fall he took the district championship in the Improvise Speech category.

The all-area title match is set for 5:30 p.m. Saturday, March 9 in the Mayflower Hotel, Plymouth. Guests are welcome.

For information about the Toastmaster club for residents in this area, call Phyllis Sullivan, 455-1635.

Free smoke detectors and free installation are available to seniors and physically handicapped Farmington Hills residents who qualify under federal guidelines.

A complete listing of all regular activities and special events for seniors is listed in The Senior Messenger which can be picked up without charge in the center. The center is open from 10 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. weekdays.

LAMAZE CHILD BIRTH EDUCATION ASSOCIATION OF LIVONIA offers a series of classes that include sharing with one another and exercise for mothers with babies and small children, and mothers-to-be. The series begins at 10 a.m. Wednesday, Feb. 27, in Memorial Church of Christ, 35475 Five Mile Road, between Farmington Road and Levan, in Livonia.

The fee of \$25 for the six week series includes babysitting services. Registration and inquiries are taken by Elaine Foster, 592-8618.

FARMINGTON COMMUNITY CENTER WOMEN'S CLUB meet at 12:30 p.m. Friday, March 1, for lunch and a program in the center, on Farmington Road north of 10 Mile Road. Reservations, at \$5 each, are necessary, and must be made before Friday, Feb. 27, by calling the center, 477-8404. Guests are welcome.

Evaluation contest winners were Al-

Guest speakers for the day are Linda Levy and Pat Shren, both specialists from Estee Lauder. The two will give advice on skin care and new colors for spring. And they will choose two club members to receive make-up makeovers during the afternoon.

The club meets the first Friday of each month. It is a social group for women of all ages with new-found freedom. The center is used as a meeting spot for programs. Some months a trip is planned.

MICHIGAN ASSOCIATION FOR CHILDREN AND ADULTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES, Farmington Chapter, meet for informal discussion at 7:30 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 28, in Farmington Hills Branch Library, 32737 12 Mile Road.

Discussion is centered around the questions "How do we cope as parents of handicapped children?" and "Where do we need help, at home, at school?"

All club news and announcements for this column are to be addressed to: Club Circuit, Farmington Observer, 33203 Grand River, Farmington 48024. The information must arrive before noon on the Monday before Thursday publication.

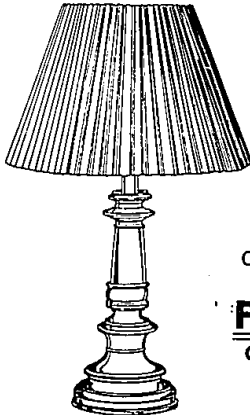
News that's closer to home



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Preschoolers enrollments now accepted

Farmington Co-Op Preschool is now accepting applications for the 1985-86 school year.

The school, located in Unitarian Universalist Church, 25301 Halsted Road, offers programs for 3-year-olds Tuesday and Thursday mornings, and for 4-year-olds on Monday, Wednesday and Friday afternoons.

Fee for the two-day program is \$22 a month and for the three-day program \$32 a month.

Inquiries are taken by Mary Lou Grant at 851-2786.

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