

Doctors treat mothers as victims: MD

By DOROTHY LIPOVENKO

Doctors have converted pregnancy into a nine-month disease, and harm babies by limiting mothers' weight gain during pregnancy and pumping them full of painkillers during birth, a U.S. physician and author says.

Dr. Robert Mendelsohn of Chicago advocates home births (his two Toronto grandchildren were born at home) and sees childbirth "passing into the hands of midwives, whether it's legal or illegal."

A medical maverick who has parlayed his confessions about the "religion of Modern Medicine" into two bestsellers, (Confessions of a Medical Heretic and, more recently, Male Practice: How Doctors Manipulate Women), Dr. Mendelsohn was in Toronto yesterday to speak to the National Institute on Mental Retardation.

He delivers much the same message to families of the mentally retarded as he does to patients who are "victimized by Modern Medicine" — don't be manipulated by doctors and don't put your child into an institution.

The 55-year-old physician who specializes in pediatrics (the target of his next book) believes that female patients are the victims of doctors' male chauvinism and often are exposed to needless risks and surgical intervention.

The gallery of horrors he documents include unnecessary mastectomies and hysterectomies, and the indiscriminate use of X-rays and prescription of tranquilizers.

In the case of pregnant women, he said, the abuse continues with ultrasound, fetal X-rays, amniocentesis, anti-nausea drugs, induced labor, fetal monitors and the painkillers used during labor and delivery — which are harmful to mother and child.

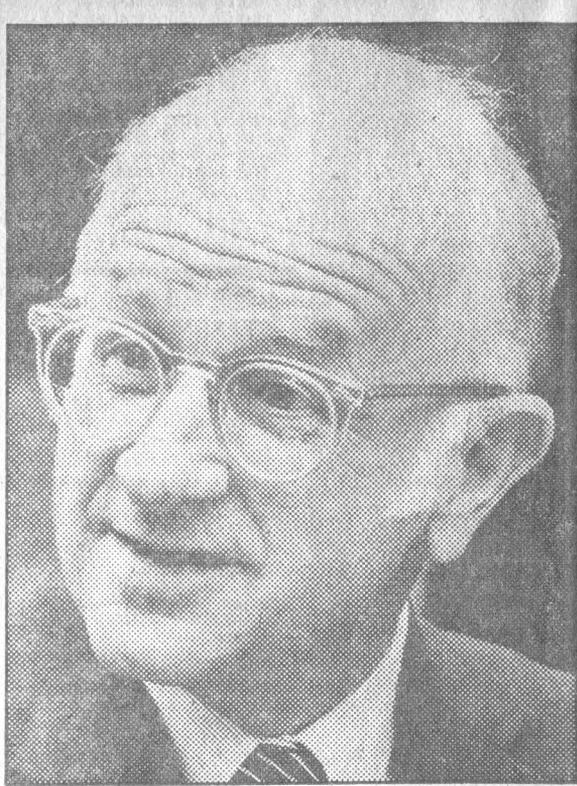
A champion of breastfeeding ("There are 200 times the amount of lead in formula than in breast milk."), Dr. Mendelsohn is heartened that more pregnant women are using family physicians instead of obstetricians. He said painkillers used during birth and the separation of mother and child after birth are responsible for 99 per cent of post-partum depression.

He reserved some of his harshest criticism for physicians responsible for the soaring rate of Caesarian births in North America — accounting for one-fifth of births in Canada and as many as 40 per cent in the United States.

He said the C-section rate should be no more than about 5 per cent and advised women to find out how common the method of delivery is in their doctors' practices when choosing physicians for obstetrical care.

Doctors frighten women into having babies in hospital by citing such possible complications as hemorrhaging, Dr. Mendelsohn said, but noted that hemorrhaging is often caused by medical intervention — the use of forceps, painkillers during birth and the induction of labor.

Chairman of the medical licencing committee for



Globe and Mail, Barrie Davis

Dr. Robert Mendelsohn

Illinois, Dr. Mendelsohn is highly critical of the needless use of most X-rays. "If carelessly done and unnecessary X-rays were reduced by one-third, it would save the lives of 1,000 (in the United States) who die of cancer every year," he wrote.

He believes women who have accumulated excessive radiation during their lives have a greater chance of delivering a Down's child. "Doctors continue to tell older women that they shouldn't have babies because their eggs may be weary rather than determining how much radiation exposure they have had."

Asked about toxic shock syndrome, which has been linked with the use of tampons, Dr. Mendelsohn noted that the kind of staphylococcus bacteria implicated in the disease is most commonly found in hospitals and doctors' offices.

"It's another factor to consider. The investigators should have asked patients if they worked in hospital, or had been to a physician's office before they got sick," he said.

Social Notices

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FORTHCOMING MARRIAGES

MR. and MRS. DENNIS A. GILL of Willowdale are pleased to announce the forthcoming marriage of their daughter, Lesley Christina, to Ian Keith Middleton, son of Mr. Keith Middleton and the late Mrs. Audrey Middleton. The wedding will take place Friday, August 28, 1981 at St. Matthews Church in Willowdale at 6 p.m.

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WEDDINGS

MRS. PHILEMON LEANEY announces with pleasure the marriage of her daughter, Wendy Ann to Mr. W. Keith Gray at Yorkminster Park Baptist Church, Toronto, on Saturday August 22, 1981.

REYNOLDS-MAPPIN. Larry and Nancy Reynolds announce with pleasure the marriage of their daughter, Sally, to Jefferson, son of John and Judy Mappin of Montreal, on Saturday, August 22, 1981 at their home Mono Mills, Ontario.

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