

Comfortable labor

Prepared childbirth easier

A year ago, Susan Trefry, a registered nurse, decided that somewhere in this world, there must be a way to have a baby in a more dignified, comfortable way.

Today, she and Kulla Cornwell of Bryan and Bonnie Broderick of College Station are teaching pregnant women classes in prepared childbirth.

"Coming to these classes is in no way related to using or not using anesthesia. That is entirely up to the husband and wife and their doctor. These classes are meant to make the woman more comfortable with her pregnancy and childbirth," explains Trefry.

"Natural childbirth" often connotes no or minimal anesthesia, but the classes are not meant to decide this question for expectant parents.

Using the Lamaze Method, couples are taught concentrated breathing and relaxation.

The method was originated in the Soviet Union in the 1940's, and was called Psychoprophylaxis. Several years later a doctor by the name of Fernand Lamaze instituted a similar method in France. An American patient of his, Marjorie Karmel, brought the idea to the U.S. in the '50's.

The classes do not guarantee a painless childbirth. Trefry does guarantee, however, that by using the method, any pain the mother may feel would be considerably less than if she were not using the method.

"We try to discourage the attitude of being a martyr," says Trefry. "This class is to make things

easier; it's a class for chickens."

Explaining the way the method works, Trefry says, "The brain has to receive messages of stimulus. We try to block the pathways to the brain by giving it other things to do. We try to interfere with the pain stimulus that is coming from the uterus. It requires complete concentration to block these stimuli. Thus, we teach concentrated breathing rather than concentrated discomfort."

"We teach methods of relaxation that require conscious mental activity and concentration. We also explain in detail how the baby is born. The truth and facts are always less frightening than the unknown," she said.

Wives are required to bring their husbands to the classes that meet

once a week for six weeks. Assistance is needed to perform the exercises and in the words of one expectant mother, "If my husband was interested enough to be present when the baby was conceived, then he's going to be interested enough to be present when the baby is born."

Parents who have taken the course are not ignorant of what is happening and can handle the majority of the labor without assistance, says Trefry.

Although the Lamaze Method is not formulated on the idea of no anesthesia, natural childbirth often means just that. "We have let ourselves be convinced by doctors who have never experienced labor and by our unprepared frightened forbears that our labor will be too painful to bear," said Jane Kates Pincus, contributing author of "Our Bodies, Ourselves."

The Lamaze Method does not advocate having babies at home or without anesthesia. What it does say is "that it is not normal to have babies while heavily drugged, in helpless ignorance and pain, and totally dependent on the medical profession. We believe that it is much more natural for us to want to know what is happening to our bodies during labor."

The approach of natural childbirth is to try to eliminate the fear of labor through education and exercise. Through the Lamaze Method, women are asked to respond actively to uterine contractions with a set of prelearned, controlled breathing exercises.

As the intensity of contractions increase, the mother's breathing increases. Through controlled breathing and concentrated relaxation, the women do not require heavy pain-relieving drugs.

Classes taught in the Bryan-College Station area cost \$20.

Besides breathing and relaxation techniques, couples are informed about different types of pain medication and breast feeding.



Interested women and men learn natural childbirth techniques. (Photo by Tom Kayser)

Family planning coming to CS

Money needed to ensure May opening

By JERRY NEEDHAM
Staff Writer

Planned Parenthood of Houston is attempting to open a College Station branch this spring.

About \$1,000 must be raised in the community to support a branch clinic, said Marianne Hamm, local promoter for Planned Parenthood.

Approximately \$700 has already been collected in the local fund drive. Hamm said she hopes the clinic can open around May 1.

A booth will be open in the Memorial Student Center Thursday and Friday to provide information and receive contributions.

Some reasons cited by Hamm for the need of such a clinic are the rapidly growing population of the area and a demand for low-cost family planning that has exceeded available services.

The A&M Student Health Center offers counseling and prescriptions for contraceptives to students but no services are available to their families.

Planned Parenthood of Houston, Inc. is a non-profit corporation staffed essentially by volunteers trained in: clinical aid, family planning counseling, patient recruitment and other areas.

Hamm said the local clinic would primarily provide family planning, contraception devices and educational programs. Patients seeking other similar services would be referred to local physicians or, in case of financial need, to the Houston center.

The Brazos Valley Family Planning Clinic is currently operating a federally-funded service for no charge. Eligibility is determined by income level and family size.

Planned Parenthood is a private organization with services available to all members of the community regardless of income. Fees will be charged on a fee-for-service basis and based on ability to pay.

The clinic will be administered locally by a medical doctor and a nurse practitioner, Hamm said. The proposed site of the center will be next to the Silver Dollar Saloon on Texas Avenue.

Those interested in volunteering may call Hamm at 822-1226 after 5 p.m.

This man is special.



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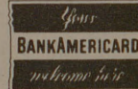
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