

The Midwife.

Analgesia Births More than Doubled.

MORE than twice as many mothers are now receiving analgesia when their babies are born at home compared with before the National Health Service came into operation.

Returns received by the Ministry of Health for the six months ended June 30th last show that the number of cases was 58,969, against 40,177 in the six months ended December 31st, 1948. For the whole of 1947 the total was 43,683. The figures for the 12 months, June, 1948, to June, 1949—the first year of the National Health Service—represent an increase of 127 per cent. over those for 1947.

By the end of last June 6,065 of the 7,826 midwives working in the domiciliary midwifery service of the local health authorities had received training in the use of analgesics, in particular gas-and-air. Each of the 146 local health authorities (county councils and county boroughs) now have at least some of their midwives trained for giving this aid.

Whereas the number of gas-and-air machines available for domiciliary midwives was 2,820 at the end of 1947, the total was 4,108 at the end of 1948, and at June 30th last had reached 4,729, with over 500 on order.

Low Stillbirth and Infant Mortality Rates in September Quarter.

PROVISIONAL figures for England and Wales published recently in the Registrar General's Quarterly Return* show that the infant mortality rate and the stillbirth rate for the September quarter, 1949, were the lowest ever recorded for any quarter.

Deaths of children under one year of age numbered 4,883, representing an infant mortality rate of 26 per 1,000 related live births, compared with 5,514 deaths and a rate of 28 per 1,000 in the same period last year, which was the previous lowest rate recorded for any quarter.

There were 4,104 stillbirths registered during the quarter giving a rate of 21.9 per 1,000 live and still births, compared with 4,447 and the previous lowest rate of 22.7 in the same period a year ago.

Births

The number of live births registered was 183,278, giving a rate of 16.6 per 1,000 total population, which may be compared with 17.5, 20.0 and 19.8 in the third quarters of 1948, 1947 and 1946 respectively.

Of the births registered, 94,260 were males and 89,018 females.

The number of illegitimate births, included in the total, was 9,248 or 5.0 per cent. of the total births registered, compared with 10,186 or 5.3 per cent. in the corresponding quarter of 1948.

Deaths

One hundred and one thousand, two hundred and seven deaths were registered during the quarter, giving a rate of 9.2 per 1,000 total population.

Deaths from acute poliomyelitis and polioencephalitis (provisional total, excluding non-civilians) numbered 250 compared with 60, 83, 27 and 28 in the four preceding quarters.

The diarrhoea death rate for children under two years of age was 2.6 per 1,000 births (476 deaths).

Natural Increase

The births registered exceeded the deaths by 82,071, the corresponding increases for the third quarters of the years 1946, 1947 and 1948 being respectively 112,642, 119,409 and 90,313.

* The Registrar General's Quarterly Return of Births, Deaths and Marriages, No. 403. H.M. Stationery Office, price 1s. net (or by post from P.O. Box 569, London, S.E.1., price 1s. 1d.)

Survey of Sickness

Out of 3,509 men interviewed, 2,186 reported having had some illness or injury in May and there were 1,478 consultations with doctors; out of 4,323 women interviewed, 3,167 reported having had some illness or injury in the same month and there were 1,856 consultations with doctors.

Illness or injury of some kind during a month in the period April, May, June was reported by 68.1 per cent. of all persons interviewed; the average incapacity among all persons interviewed was 0.90 of a day per month.

Among housewives (36.3 per cent. of the total interviewed), 76.5 per cent. reported having had some illness or injury during a month, compared with the general level of 68.1 per cent.

600 Miles Dash by Cutter and Train for Nursing Exam.

A desperate dash over 115 miles of storm-swept sea in a tiny fishing cutter was the first leg of an eventful journey of more than 600 miles by an Australian nursing sister to sit for an important examination in Melbourne.

Miss Elizabeth Hollingsworth, of Queen Victoria Hospital, Melbourne, had been stranded in an island lighthouse west of Adelaide, because the lighthouse supply ship was behind schedule.

Her father, the lighthouse keeper, attracted the attention of a nearby crayfish cutter, which took her aboard and headed immediately for Port Adelaide. The trip took 17 hours.

Even then Miss Hollingsworth's troubles were not over. Leaving the ship, she dropped her purse containing £17 overboard. It was recovered a few hours later by a member of the crew.

Meanwhile, still uncertain whether she would be in time for the examination, Miss Hollingsworth had left on the 500-mile trip to Melbourne. She was too late to sit for the scheduled examination, but special arrangements will be made for her to take it later.

Word for the Month.

Who is the happy Warrior? . . . It is the generous spirit, who, when brought among the tasks of real life, hath wrought upon the plan that pleased his boyish thought! Whose high endeavours are an inward light that makes the path before him always bright.

Wordsworth.

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