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CARE OF THE

NEWBORN

IN KENYA

By

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PREFACE

The newborn baby is ill understood, even by a sizeable proportion of doctors. This is particularly so when he is born with a low birthweight. As a result, the newborn and his problems are often avoided or at best improperly handled, leaving the mother to do as best as she can for him. The consequence is that babies become frequently ill, many are lost during the first day of life, and again during the subsequent twenty eight days. These deaths exceed those occurring during the rest of the first year of life by a ratio of two to one. They are largely unnecessary and the bulk are preventable.

At this time when the Ministry of Health is emphasising a national family welfare programme, we must keep on reminding ourselves that a successful family planning programme should be based on the understanding that all those who are born survive and that they remain healthy to grow up into normal and useful adults. This manual, I am confident, will contribute towards that goal. Shortages of drugs, equipment and personnel should not prevent us from providing satisfactory neo-natal care.

Since his arrival in Kenya, Dr. Cross took a keen interest in teaching about, as well as in the care of the newborn babies in Kenyatta National Hospital. He has also travelled throughout all the main hospitals in the country during the past year. This manual is the culmination of his experience. The booklet is particularly welcome at this time when increasingly the cry is heard from various cadres of students at this hospital asking for books which emphasise the Kenyan situation. I hope this book is but a beginning of similar texts yet to be produced.

This is essentially a practical manual which is very simply written. Dr. Cross has avoided most of the details that are of no immediate value to the majority of neonates. If the health personnel dealing with neonates followed the contents of this manual they should find the care of the newborn a worthwhile undertaking.

This booklet is aimed particularly at the nurses, midwives and clinical officers. However, I am confident that public health nurses, undergraduates as well as practising doctors that are involved with the care of newborn babies will find here valuable practical advice. I sincerely hope that the health personnel in this country will utilise the sound and already tested information to be found here for the benefit of hundreds of babies born in Kenya every day.

Med
Afr.
RJ

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