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A STUDY ON THE PATHOLOGY OF ABORTION

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being a thesis submitted by

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SUMMARY

The pathology of abortion has received scant attention during centuries of medical progress. A review of the literature is presented in support of this statement, with critical comments where applicable. The review commences with a publication in the fourth decade of the 19th century and concludes with a publication in 1968. It is arranged in three sections, namely, before 1900, from 1901 to 1958, and from 1959 to 1968, with a summary at the end of each section.

A total of 695 consecutive specimens of abortion, including 18 of ectopic pregnancy, have been examined during the two year period from April, 1965 to March, 1967. The pathological changes in abortion specimens are presented in a systematic manner. They are considered under five headings: the foetus, the cord, the placenta and its membranes, the decidua and the endometrium. Each abnormality is described with a note about its significance and is illustrated where possible.

A classification of abortion specimens is proposed on the basis of the pathological changes, supplemented by clinical information. The changes responsible for abortion are specified under each group in the following classification:

1. Ectopic pregnancies.

UTERINE ABORTIONS:

2. Induced abortions.
3. Inadequate specimens (usually curettage).
4. Septic abortions.
5. Spontaneous abortions:
 - 5.1. Defective ova and trophoblast.
 - 5.2. Placental pathology.
 - 5.3. Cord pathology.
 - 5.4. Foetal pathology.
 - 5.5. Chorionic vascular disease.
 - 5.6. Atypical endometrium.
 - 5.7. Uterine conditions.
 - 5.8. Idiopathic abortions.

The pathological changes in different parts of the specimens have been analysed in each group and are presented in tabular form, demonstrating that each specimen must carry one final diagnostic label despite a variety of abnormalities which might be present.

In the light of the relevant findings of other authors, the various groups in the above classification are discussed in detail. The data of the present series are reclassified, for comparison, following the criteria employed by two previous authors. It is thereby claimed that the present classification is the most acceptable so far.

It is pointed out that pathological examination of all available material is necessary for the confirmation of a clinically presumed abortion. Some specimens revealed appearances inconsistent with abortion; there were 37 such specimens in the present study.

The clinical implications of the present classification are considered in comparison with the findings of previous authors and the reasons for disagreement are outlined. Approximately 44 per cent of the spontaneous abortions in the present series could not have been saved by any therapeutic measures.

A comparison of the incidence of the various pathological causes of abortion in women under 27 years of age with that in women aged 27 years and over revealed that maternal age did not influence the pathological cause of abortion.

The conclusions set out at the end of the thesis indicate the contribution this study makes to medical knowledge.