

The St. Helens Hospitals have played a most important part in advancing obstetrics generally. The staff of obstetrical specialists have carried out very valuable clinical research work, particularly into different methods of affording pain-relief to patients during labour, and three of them have participated in a research into the treatment of toxæmias of pregnancy by progestin. This *corpus luteum hormone* was supplied free by the Organon Laboratories, and the method followed was that described by Drs. Robson and Paterson, who recorded very good results.

Unfortunately, their findings have not been confirmed by the trials made in the use of this hormone by the St. Helens Hospitals.

The Medical Superintendent of the Wellington St. Helens Hospital has introduced a series of exercises in the ante-natal period, to a certain extent during confinement and post-natally, following the system called the Margaret Morris exercises. She reports that 211 patients received instruction in these exercises during the year, and that results are so far gratifying. The extension of this method of treatment is shortly to be introduced at St. Helens Hospital, Christchurch. For this purpose a masseuse trained in the method will be employed as is done in Wellington.

The further results of research work of this nature will be of benefit to the patients and a very valuable contribution to our knowledge.

The social welfare of the patients in St. Helens Hospitals receives special consideration, and great help has been given to the medical and nursing staff by various organizations in supplying the hospitals with lending libraries, providing layettes, extra clothing for mothers in poor circumstances, and, where necessary, special food prior to entering and after leaving the hospital. In this connection the thanks of the staff of the hospitals and the Department are due to many organizations, particularly to the Mayor's Relief Funds and branches of the Red Cross Society in the main centres: Rotary Clubs; St. John Ambulance Associations; Girl Guide Associations; St. Vincent de Paul Society, Christchurch and Wellington; St. Thomas's Guild, Wellington; Seafair League of Mothers, Wellington; Welfare Circle, Lyceum Club, Auckland; Auckland Hospital Auxiliary, and various Auckland church and Old Girls' organizations, and in particular the society specially formed for this purpose in Christchurch—namely, the Friends of St. Helens Society—which has co-ordinated the work of various others and under the energetic management of its president has given most valuable assistance.

#### MATERNAL MORTALITY AND MORBIDITY (EUROPEAN).

It is satisfactory to be able to report a further drop in the number of deaths from puerperal causes, exclusive of those from sepsis following abortion, practically all of which are induced. The Government Statistician's returns show that there were 70 maternal deaths from puerperal causes, as compared with 78 last year, and as the total European live births were increased by 1,177, the puerperal death-rate has fallen to the lowest yet reached in New Zealand—namely, 2·69.

Graph No. II, with Tables V and VA, show the number of deaths under various causes as supplied by the Government Statistician and shows the progress in maternal welfare.

TABLE V.—Showing the Number of Puerperal Deaths and the Death-rate per 1,000 Live Births, 1927–37.

|                                                                                                       |      | 1927. | 1928. | 1929. | 1930. | 1931. | 1932. | 1933. | 1934. | 1935. | 1936. | 1937. |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Puerperal sepsis following child-birth                                                                | No.  | 56    | 42    | 30    | 27    | 18    | 13    | 14    | 17    | 8     | 9     | 14    |
|                                                                                                       | Rate | 2·01  | 1·54  | 1·12  | 1·01  | 0·68  | 0·52  | 0·58  | 0·70  | 0·33  | 0·36  | 0·54  |
| Accidents of labour (hæmorrhages, shock, embolism, and accidents of childbirth not otherwise defined) | No.  | 35    | 30    | 39    | 36    | 31    | 30    | 29    | 19    | 24    | 25    | 12    |
|                                                                                                       | Rate | 1·26  | 1·10  | 1·46  | 1·34  | 1·16  | 1·21  | 1·19  | 0·78  | 1·00  | 1·01  | 0·46  |
| Toxæmia and eclampsia                                                                                 | No.  | 27    | 40    | 34    | 36    | 38    | 23    | 29    | 30    | 34    | 30    | 35    |
|                                                                                                       | Rate | 0·97  | 1·47  | 1·27  | 1·34  | 1·43  | 0·92  | 1·19  | 1·24  | 1·42  | 1·20  | 1·35  |
| Accidents of pregnancy (non-septic abortion and ectopic gestation)                                    | No.  | 5     | 8     | 7     | 7     | 11    | 9     | 10    | 10    | 12    | 14    | 9     |
|                                                                                                       | Rate | 0·18  | 0·29  | 0·26  | 0·26  | 0·41  | 0·36  | 0·41  | 0·41  | 0·50  | 0·56  | 0·34  |
| Total maternal deaths (excluding septic abortion)                                                     | No.  | 123   | 120   | 110   | 106   | 98    | 75    | 82    | 76    | 78    | 78    | 70    |
|                                                                                                       | Rate | 4·41  | 4·42  | 4·11  | 3·96  | 3·68  | 3·02  | 3·37  | 3·12  | 3·25  | 3·14  | 2·69  |
| Septic abortion—                                                                                      |      |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| Married women                                                                                         | No.  | 14    | 14    | 19    | 26    | 26    | 24    | 16    | 29    | 17    | 13    | 16    |
| Single women                                                                                          | No.  |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
|                                                                                                       |      |       |       |       | 4     | 3     | 2     | 10    | 13    | 6     | 1     | 7     |
| Totals                                                                                                |      | 14    | 14    | 19    | 30    | 29    | 26    | 26    | 42    | 23    | 14    | 23    |
| Rate                                                                                                  |      | 0·50  | 0·51  | 0·71  | 1·12  | 1·09  | 1·04  | 1·07  | 1·73  | 0·96  | 0·56  | 0·88  |