

ASSESSMENT OF GESTATION AGE

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(SUMMARY)

He continued from where Professor Neligan stopped and pointed to the observation made in the seventeenth century that when considering age we do not include the duration of gestation. He also agreed with Dr. Nelgian that it is a mistake to try to assess the gestation age by weight. They liked to assess the gestation age because the problems in the immediate postnatal period and the prognosis differ according to age. He then showed various slides showing babies at various gestation ages.

He then proceeded to discuss the parameters used to assess the gestation age. The first one was the true last menstrual period which is not always easy to know. The time of quickening is another one but this depends on parity and the intelligence of the mother. The obstetrician can assess the size of the uterus to some degree of accuracy and he can also obtain a sample of the liquor amnii for staining with Nile Blue stain and find the percentage of orange staining cells. Again the amount of lethechin can be of use especially in those babies you want to avoid respiratory distress syndrome.

The use of radiology was then discussed. It was mentioned that X-Rays do not help much especially this type of baby you are not sure about. He then discussed the role of biochemical analysis and mentioned the presence of pepsinogen in the urine but these methods are not used. The use of E.E.G. has also been mentioned and it is thought to mature with gestation age. He showed some slides to demonstrate this and proceeded to the characteristics of the baby after it is borne that can help to assess the age. He mentioned the number of creases in the sole of the foot and the size of the breast nodule, the amount of cartilage in the ear, the appearance of the external genitalia as a help but they are not accurate. The other group of characteristics need more experience and they are, the general attitude of the baby, certain reflexes like the pupillary ones. These ones can be scored from one to five and the total added up. These were demonstrated by slides.

Summarised by Dr. Farouk A/Aziz.