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Women's finding

Mary F/I

Male dominance in reproduction research is challenged

By Joel N. Shurkin
Inquirer Staff Writer

SAN FRANCISCO — Men control most research into human reproduction, and women have suffered as a result, several women scientists have told the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

Men control the governmental agencies that make policy and disperse funds, even though most of the work is aimed at women, the scientists said. Many dangerous contraceptives have been tested or marketed with little regard for women's safety, whereas possibly safer ones have been ignored, they said.

Moreover, one woman scientist said, the growing technology that would enable couples to select the sex of their unborn children could further erode the place of women in the world.

The women scientists were part of

a symposium on ethics and reproductive research at the association's annual meeting here.

"Today's contraceptive technology — with its emphasis on hormones, devices, implants and injectables — has, in the ultimate sense, betrayed us," said Dr. Belita Cowan of the National Woman's Health Network in Washington.

Most research is done by the federal government and is coordinated by an Interagency Committee on Population Research, she said, which, until recently, "consisted of 17 white, middle-aged males. Two years ago a token female was added."

"Consequently," she said, "one of the most critical areas of ethical concern for women in the field of contraceptive development is that the scientists, researchers, developers, physicians, drug-company executives and vendors of contraceptives will never have to subject them-

selves to the very pills, devices, implants and injections they are promoting."

A survey of the researchers has indicated they do not think it is a serious problem, Dr. Cowan said.

Women are being tested with substances and devices that have not been approved for human safety, and the safety standards themselves have been lowered to permit their distribution and use, she said.

Alternate forms of contraception, such as the cervical cap (which is very popular in Europe and much cheaper than a diaphragm), the vaginal sponge and the condom are not getting adequate research funds, she said.

She said the problem would only be resolved when women take control of the research.

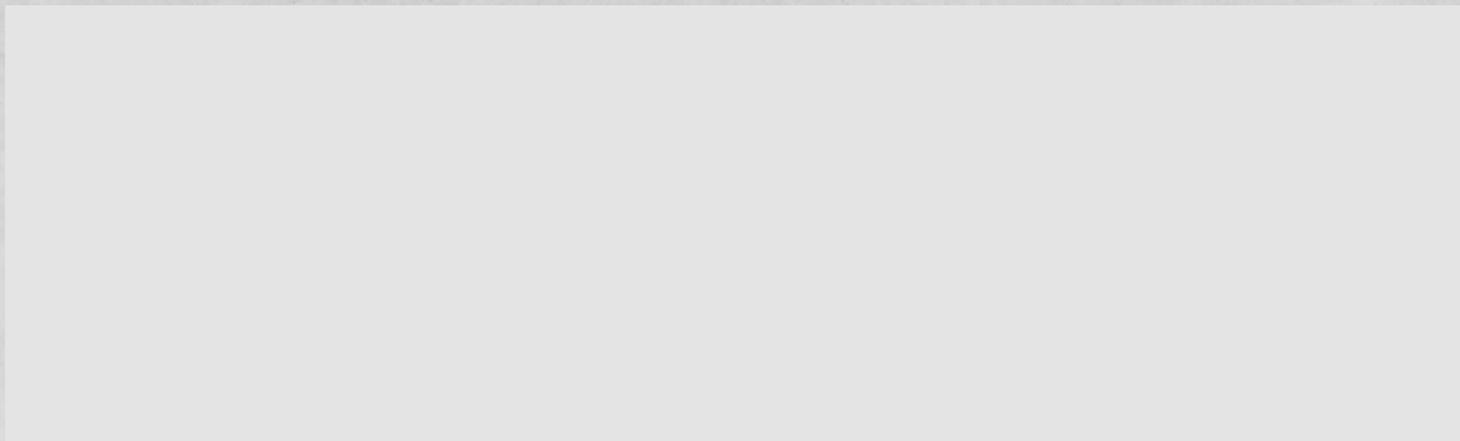
Dr. Roberta Steinbacher of Cleveland State University warned that giving couples a choice on the sex of

their children could drastically upset the balance between males and females in the world. That could have already begun, she said.

There are several methods under study for improving the chances of selecting the sex of a baby. One method involves timing intercourse to a particular point in the menstrual cycle. So far data on that method are contradictory; it is not known if intercourse early in the cycle or late in the cycle is more likely to produce boys.

There have also been some studies on post-intercourse douches that change the chemistry of the vagina. It is thought that if the vagina can be made more acidic than usual, a female might be more likely to result from conception; if the chemistry is made alkaline, it is more likely to be a male.

There are also studies into separating sperm so that conception is completed using the desired kind. Some thought has also been given to making a woman's immune system work against one kind of sex-selecting sperm.



Expert says fetus sex identifying tests valid

Associated Press

Boston, Mass.

Although women sometimes have abortions if they learn their unborn baby is not the sex they want, doctors should not limit the availability of tests that provide such information, a specialist in medical ethics says.

Fetuses Aborted To Prevent Child Of 'Wrong' Sex

By Victor Cohn

Washington Post Staff Writer

Doctors at several prominent medical centers around the country—and an unknown number of private physicians as well—have begun helping some pregnant women abort their fetuses because the baby would be the “wrong” sex.

The number of these cases is now small, but some medical authorities predict—and one bioethicist advocates—a rapid increase in the use of sophisticated tests and abortions to allow parents to select the sex of their offspring. And the procedure is already raising important moral and ethical questions within the medical profession.

The issue centers around a prenatal test called amniocentesis, in which doctors withdraw a sample of the fluid in the womb. The test provides genetic information about the fetus, and is primarily used to detect birth defects. But it also reveals the baby's sex.

It is on the basis of this test that some patients choose abortion to avoid having an unwanted boy or girl, though some doctors say the preference in these cases is most often for a boy.

In most cases, authorities said yesterday, those doctors who agree to do amniocentesis only to determine a fetus' sex do so reluctantly. In the typical case, one or both parents are highly disturbed people who threaten to end the pregnancy in any case unless they can be sure the child is the desired sex.

Most doctors apparently still refuse to do an amniocentesis for sex determination alone even in cases like these.

But this situation could be changing.

Doctors at Johns Hopkins, Yale, the University of California at Los Angeles and George Washington Univer-

See SEX, A5, Col. 1

Mo. Tribune

Sept. 7, 1979

Will boy babies be chosen over girls?

By Kathleen Newland

Washington

Critics of sex discrimination often observe, with grim certitude, that discrimination follows women from the cradle to the grave. Recently, however, that assessment has begun to seem overly optimistic.

Men's imaginations have for a long time extended discrimination beyond the grave. Mohammed once remarked that most of the inhabitants of hell were women. The Buddha re-

guarding her virginity so that she won't disgrace the family by losing it before marriage. They may have to come up with a large dowry or heavy wedding expenses in order to get her safely married off. All they invest in her upbringing she takes to another family when she marries, so that strangers reap the benefit from her parents' labors over her. Discrimination in education and on the job market will make it difficult for her to support her parents in their old age.

firmly into roles of breeders and sex objects.

There is not much point in condemning or forbidding the techniques of preselecting the sex of infants. It is not the technology that is at fault, but the deep-seated prejudices and restrictive economic circumstances that condition people to prefer boys over girls. Public officials, educators, religious figures and other leaders of popular opinion have a responsibility to try to dissuade people from this cruelest form of discrimination. Selecting the sex of children before they are born makes it possible to indulge a prejudice that would be better rooted out.

*Kathleen Newland is a researcher with Worldwatch Institute in Washington, D.C., and author of *The Sisterhood of Man*.*



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A DELIGHTFUL DAUGHTER is what Valerie and Bruce Manney have in Nancy (center); but when she was born, the doctors told the Manneys that they were the proud parents of a boy. Story on Page 5-L.

Eve's rib?

In nature, she's first, Adam second

By Ronald Kotulak
Chicago Tribune Service

If man is made in the image of his creator, then the Creator may be a woman, new scientific evidence strongly suggests.

Scientists investigating the age-old puzzle of what determines maleness or femaleness have come to the startling conclusion that nature has an almost overpowering tendency to make all babies female.

In fact, were it not for a newly discovered molecule called the "ultimate determinant of maleness," added to the embryo several weeks after conception, all babies would be

girls.

Scientists call this the "Eve principle," and it is part of a revolution in the fields of embryology and genetics.

"Nature's program in differentiating the embryo is to form Eve first, Adam second," said Dr. John Money of Johns Hopkins University, a pioneer in gender identification.

"It sort of makes the biblical story of creation somewhat backward. A female may have been created first," said Dr. Roger A. Gorski of the University of California at Los Angeles.

New findings also show that the brains of all early fetuses are basical-

ly female and convert to male function and structure only after being exposed to powerful doses of male hormones, Gorski said.

The molecule that leads the struggle to turn the originally neutral fetus into a male was discovered by Dr. Stephen S. Wachtel, an immunologist at the Cornell University Medical School and the Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center in New York City.

"You can think of maleness as a type of birth defect," Wachtel said. "In the beginning we are all headed toward femaleness."

The expansion of new knowledge
(See BABY on 5-L)