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NEWS

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Dr. Frederick Leboyer, the French obstetrician who wrote "Birth Without Violence" to describe his unique means of bringing happy babies into the world, will be in San Diego for two one-night seminars June 28 and 29.

Sponsored by the UC San Diego Office of Continuing Education in the Health Sciences, and the National Center for the Exploration of Human Potential, the seminar is titled "The Loving Hands of Dr. Leboyer."

The first session, 7 p.m. - 10 p.m. Monday, June 28, is designed for health care personnel, with a reaction panel of health professionals. The Tuesday session, also scheduled for 7 p.m. - 10 p.m., is open to the public and includes a consumer panel discussion. Both sessions will be held in the Auditorium of Marston Junior High School, 3799 Clairemont Drive, with each session costing $5. To obtain a ticket, call UCSD Extension at 452-3400.

Dr. Leboyer will discuss and show films of his simple yet unique techniques for easing birth and helping the baby to begin life joyfully, without trauma, fear or unnecessary discomfort.

In his book, Dr. Leboyer describes a newborn delivered under common practices. He refers to "that tragic expression, those tight-shut eyes, those twitching eyebrows... that howling mouth, that squirming head trying desperately to find refuge... furiously kicking feet, those arms that suddenly pull downward to protect the stomach."

Dr. Leboyer asks, "Can birth hold so much suffering, so much pain?"

Film and pictures of babies born with the Leboyer methods show the infants

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uttering one or two short cries upon birth (as they take their first breaths of air), and then relaxing, with limbs outstretched, hands unclenched, eyes wide open and mouth relaxed without cries.

The Leboyer method includes: delivery in a dimly lit room (so that sudden bright lights don't burn and hurt the newborn's eyes), a quiet room (no loud shouts for the mother to "push" again), a warm room (geared to the comfort of the infant, rather than the working adults), immediate placement of the baby on the mother's stomach, with the umbilical cord still attached (to allow for warm contact with the mother and for two sources of oxygen--the cord and new breathing -- so the infant can settle into the breathing process without danger and shock. The cord is not severed for four to five minutes.), gentle massaging of the baby by mother and doctor, and finally, placement of the infant into a warm bath (to allow the baby to relax in an environment similar to that within the uterus). Leboyer considers this preferable to the harsh feel of cloth wrapped around a newborn, who's been accustomed to its mother's internal membranes. When the baby is totally relaxed in the bath, he is lifted in and out a few times, as if it were a game, until he adjusts to the gravity outside the water. He is then diapered in a warm diaper, and wrapped in warm clothing, with his hands and head left free to move about.

All the Leboyer methods are geared towards a gradual entering of the world, rather than sudden blinding light, loud noises, cold air and harsh garments.

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Although several doctors in this country have adopted Leboyer methods, much criticism remains. Among that criticism is: a dimly lit room makes it difficult for the doctor to assess the baby's skin tone, and to clearly see if any problems are developing, and, if the umbilical cord has not stopped pulsating when the baby is placed on the mother's stomach, gravity will drain a significant amount of blood from the baby back into the placenta and possibly make the infant anemic at birth.

The panels at each of the seminars will discuss Leboyer's methods, and allow for an elaboration on his techniques and criticisms of his ideas.

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Sue Pondrom
452-3430

June 10, 1976