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Obstetric and Gynecologic Milestones

COUVELAIRE'S LIFE

Alexandre Couvelaire was born in Bourg, France, in 1873, the son of a professor.⁶ Early in his professional life he came under the influence of Varnier and later was accepted as an assistant to Pinard. Each of these distinguished French obstetricians exerted a characteristic and permanent influence on the sensitive, impressionable Couvelaire. From Varnier he obtained an appreciation of scientific method and precision of thought; from Pinard, a feeling for the social, humanitarian, and public health aspects of obstetrics.

Couvelaire spent his entire professional life in the Baudelocque Clinic, where he was made chief of clinic in 1901 and from which he did not retire until October 1, 1943. In 1914 he was appointed professor in the University of Paris and was later elected president of the Société d'Obstétrique et de Gynécologie.

In addition to his studies on placental abruption, Couvelaire is best known for the special dispensary he organized, together with Marcel Pinard, for the antisiphilitic treatment of pregnant patients, and for his establishment of a special pavilion for tuberculous women in his obstetric clinic, each of these units long serving as a model. Couvelaire was especially accomplished in obstetric surgery and in 1913 published a magnificently illustrated book, *Introduction à la Chirurgie Utérine Obstétricale*,³ in which his obstetric teachings are set forth. In addition to his radical therapy for premature separation of the placenta, Couvelaire was one of the pioneers in the use of cesarean section for certain cases of placenta previa.

Couvelaire went into seclusion following the German occupation of France, and after a long illness, died on March 14, 1948.⁵ During his active career he was probably the dominant figure in French obstetrics.