

Pioneer's Report

Operation Aids 85% of 'Blue' Babies

The life-saving value of the now-famous "blue-baby" operation was described in cold statistics here last night by its pioneer diagnostician.

Dr. Helen B. Taussig of Johns Hopkins Hospital, Baltimore, reporting on the results of 1000 such consecutive operations, noted that children undergoing the formidable heart surgery have an 85 percent chance of living longer, healthier and happier lives.

The operation, devised in 1944 by her and Dr. Alfred Blalock, at Johns Hopkins, is for an abnormal heart condition suffered by some 7 of every 10 so-called blue-babies. Without surgery such children live restricted lives and usually die before adulthood.

Dr. Taussig was guest lecturer ~~last night at the Naval Medical School, National Naval Medical Center, Bethesda, Md.~~ She reported on "The Results of the First 1000 Patients with Pulmonary Stenosis or Atresia Submitted to Blalock-Taussig Operation."

The 1000 patients were those who were operated on from the pioneer first in November, 1944, to the 1000th last October. Thus, all patients reported on, Dr. Taussig noted in her prepared talk, have been followed for at least six months after operation and some for longer than six years.

Of the 1000, she reported, 844 survived the operation. Of those who survived, 781 obtained good results, 37 showed fair results and 26 were unimproved. Of the 818 with good and fair post-operative results, there were 84 who failed to maintain their improvement, and 32 late deaths.

These statistics, however, were for all the operations performed, many of which were for heart conditions other than the tetralogy of Fallot, the specific condition for which the operation was devised. Less than 15 percent of patients with true tetralogy of Fallot, she noted, either died or failed to show improvement.

Dr. Taussig also noted that follow-up studies of the patients showed that those who recovered the post-operative period are not "appreciably" more susceptible to heart infections.