

the critical phase of development, i.e. between the third and sixth week of pregnancy.

Although the critical time was similar to that of German measles viral infection was excluded by the steady increase in the number of patients over a 2-year period and also by the distribution of the cases. Viruses know no territorial borders. This epidemic remained strikingly centered in West Germany. German pediatricians became aware of the problem. Extensive studies had been instituted in a number of centers. Lenz in Hamburg. Weicker in Bonn, Wiedemann(2) in Kiel, and Pfeiffer and Kosenow(4) in Münster each undertook special studies. Many doctors suspected radioactive fallout. Lengthy questionnaires were sent out inquiring about X-ray exposure, hormones, detergents, foods (and food preservatives), contraceptive measures, and tests for pregnancy. Most of these were retrospective studies. Dr. Lenz's initial studies showed that approximately 20% of his patients had taken Contergan. On Nov. 8 it occurred to him that Contergan was the cause. He requestioned his patients and the incidence promptly rose to about 50%. Many of the patients stated that they had considered that drug too innocent to mention it on the questionnaire.



Fig. 3.—Malformation of hand and foot.



Fig. 4.—Malformation of ear. Top, slight abnormality; bottom, severe malformation.

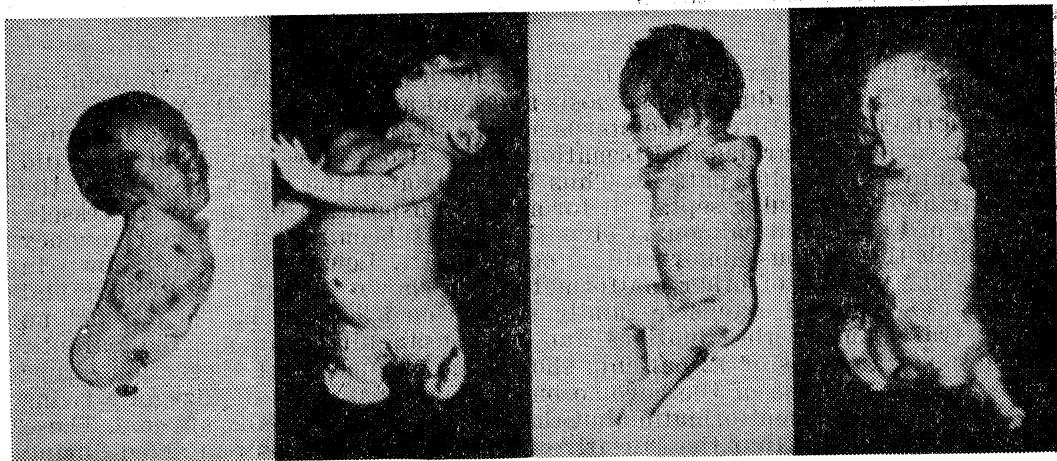


Fig. 5.—Infants with severe phocomelia (Wiedemann²).