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OBSTETRICS AND GYNECOLOGY BOARD REVIEW MANUAL

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Eclampsia: Case Studies; Laparoscopic Reconstructive Pelvic Surgery

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Cover Illustration by Jean Gardner

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HOSPITAL PHYSICIAN®

OBSTETRICS AND GYNECOLOGY BOARD REVIEW MANUAL

Chapter 1—Eclampsia: Case Studies

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I. INTRODUCTION

This manual describes the diagnosis, treatment, prevention, and management of seizures in women with eclampsia or who are at risk for eclampsia. Seizure prophylaxis and treatment are discussed for various situations ranging from prophylaxis for at-risk women who have never had eclampsia to the management of serious complications in women with complex eclampsia. Three case patients are presented to highlight and illustrate major concepts as well as to provide a mechanism for self-assessment. Questions provided throughout the text mimic those that might be asked on the oral board examinations; the answers are provided somewhere in the text.

DEFINITION

- **What is eclampsia?**
- **How is eclampsia unique from other causes of seizure activity?**

Eclampsia is the development of seizure activity during pregnancy that can be attributed to pregnancy-induced hypertension (PIH) and cannot be attributed to other causes. PIH encompasses the range of hypertensive disorders that are specifically associated with pregnancy. PIH exhibits a broad spectrum of clinical disease from mild involvement to life-threatening com-

plications. When categorizing patients with PIH, those with eclampsia are considered to have severe disease, but clinical evidence of progressive mild signs and symptoms of PIH does not reliably precede the onset of seizure activity.

The goals of managing patients with eclampsia are the same as the goals for managing any woman with severe PIH. These goals include assessment and stabilization of the patient's airway, breathing, circulation, and higher neurologic function; evaluation for the presence of other potentially life-threatening conditions and initiation of corrective action; and implementation of a plan for delivery. Delivery has been identified as the only definitive treatment for any manifestation of PIH, including eclampsia.¹

EPIDEMIOLOGY

- **How common is eclampsia?**
- **Can patients who are at increased risk for developing eclampsia be identified?**

Hypertensive disease has been identified as a major cause of maternal mortality in the United States, accounting for 10.4% of the deaths reviewed in a 1988 report.² The incidence of eclampsia ranges from 1 in 337 to 1 in 3448 deliveries, with the higher incidence rates reported at large, metropolitan, tertiary referral centers.³ Eclampsia is described as primarily a disease of primigravid younger women (eg, women