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Fuel costs, C-sections have something in common

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Not only is the price of gas rocketing to high levels. A recent report by the Society of Obstetricians and Gynecologists of Canada (SOGC) says that 26.3 percent of women now have babies delivered by caesarian section. There are many different opinions of why this has happened in both Canada and the U. S. But William Shakespeare had the ultimate explanation. Not just North America has seen this increase. In Hong Kong the caesarian rate is 27 percent and in Brazil 32 percent. These are hefty figures when the World Health Organization

claims that a rate of over 15 percent is questionable.

Years ago it would have been utter madness to perform a caesarian operation unless there were life-threatening complications.

But I speculated years ago that the Caesarian rate would increase. Women in North America were starting to request caesarian deliveries. Other women in Thailand were asking for caesarians on a lucky day such as the birthday of their revered Queen or on Valentine's Day. This is a dangerous game to play as the lucky day may be a lethal day for the baby.

So what are the reasons for and against either natural or caesarian delivery? There are several vital points to consider. Most doctors still claim that the natural delivery is the best way to deliver a baby unless there's an obstetrical complication. Natural birth, however, can leave a trail of woe.

Tissues supporting the bladder are sometimes stretched beyond their limits. The resulting falling down of the bladder causes a loss of urine on coughing or sneezing. And if rectal muscles have been seriously injured, fecal loss can occur. These are very discomfoting problems and explain why several years ago a survey of female obstetricians in London, England, showed that one-third would personally prefer a caesarian section over a vaginal delivery.

The caesarian can prevent these problems. Moreover, due to today's improved surgical techniques, better anesthesia and antibiotics, fewer surgical complications result. But this operation requires longer hospital stays, greater expense and there's always the chance of infection, and even unexpected death.

A study at the University of Toronto revealed that of 100,000 women having an elective caesarian, six women will die compared to two women who have a vaginal delivery. But of 100,000 women who require surgery to repair an injured bladder or bowel following a vaginal delivery, some will also die.

The SOGC is currently exploring options to decrease the number of caesarians such as educating doctors and women on the benefits of vaginal delivery. But I believe they face an impossible task.

Today more women are working and want to time the date of delivery by choosing a caesarian. There are also an increasing number of obese women resulting in diabetes, hypertension and kidney disease. Others are deciding on having pregnancies later in life. All result in more complicated pregnancies requiring surgery.

But the major problem is the doctor's fear of litigation. If a baby is born with an abnormality, too many patients immediately conclude it's the doctor's fault. Unfortunately, too many lawyers agree with them bringing questionable lawsuits against doctors and hospitals when what's happened is often "an act of God".

No doctor chooses to endure this legal stress when the caesarian operation might avoid calamity.

So unless William Shakespeare gets his wish when he wrote in King Henry VI, "The first thing we do, let's kill all the lawyers", the fear of years in court will continue to affect a doctor's decision about natural or caesarian delivery.

My prediction is that rather than a decrease there will be an increase in both the price of gas and the number of caesarians births in the years ahead.

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