

Administration, strangely divergent views continue in the medical and lay press. The pill is either blessed or damned; a valuable therapeutic tool or a potential killer. The medical profession seems to me to be undergoing a schism into "those for" and "those against" the pill. The proponents are largely clinicians who have used the pill day in and day out, over many years, in thousands of patients and have not been impressed by the newspaper scare stories. The opponents are usually physicians or investigators who have not, for one reason or another, been in contact with patients or who have chosen not to prescribe the pill even if they are. The year 1969 did not, unfortunately, bring forth a verdict; neither a winner nor a loser was chosen. Only one decision stands or stood: The pill is safe. Safer than what? Safer than pregnancy on the basis of mortality figures but not as safe as continence.

Almost without exception the consequences of contraception are beneficial and contribute significantly to the health and well-being of the community. In contrast, many societies permit drugs and other practices which are of questionable value or are demonstrably harmful. The ill-effects of alcohol and tobacco, which are tolerated for no better reason than that they provide comfort and pleasure, add appreciably to the mortality and morbidity rates of many societies, but they are inadequately regulated by civil law and social custom and do not fall within the sphere of medical prescription. John Peel and Malcolm Potts, in their recently published book, "Textbook of Contraceptive Practice," state:

Thirty thousand deaths from lung cancer occur yearly in Britain, the majority due to smoking. By the end of the century more British men will have died from smoking-induced cancer than in two world wars. For every pill-induced death in Britain there are at least 1,500 cigarette induced deaths; based on the total sales of the two products during 1967 one cigarette is three times as dangerous to life as one pill.

Mr. GORDON. Dr. Kistner, may I interrupt for just one moment? Since you compared the risks of smoking with that of the pill, do you know of any cases where smoking three packages of cigarettes has caused either serious illness or death? Three packages?

Dr. KISTNER. Smoking three packages?

Mr. GORDON. Right.

Dr. KISTNER. Obviously the answer to that question is no.

Mr. GORDON. I have here the proceedings of a conference held on September 10, 1962, at the headquarters of the American Medical Association sponsored by G. D. Searle and Co. In the back of that, appendix 3, there are case reports, and several reports where people have either died or have become seriously injured taking the pill for only 3 months, in other words, three packages of pills.

Dr. KISTNER. Is there a cause and effect relationship demonstrated or proved?

Mr. GORDON. Well, it just says "Case reports: Thrombosis and embolism in patients taking the pill."

Dr. KISTNER. There is no cause and effect relationship so far as I understand.

Mr. GORDON. They said the same thing about tobacco.