

We, of course, are interested, everybody is interested to know what might be the sensitizing situation so that you can anticipate which women might get hypertension. We do not have any firm clues. But it does look as though those who accumulate salt and water and gain weight on the oral contraceptives might be especially vulnerable; also those who have underlying kidney diseases might be especially vulnerable.

The comforting thing thus far about the observation is the fact that on stopping the pill, from 2 to 8 months later, the hypertension goes away in most cases. In the ones that we have observed, anyway. So that it is a reversible thing so far.

I think the means of dealing with it is to insist, or as has been emphasized in other aspects of this hearing, to fully disclose new observations like this as the first step; full education—and education, unfortunately, is a continuing process. You can tell somebody something last year and they do not remember it this year, so that you cannot repeat these facts often enough.

They should be in conspicuous places, as some people have indicated, in the package circular, and elsewhere.

I think the advice we would give tentatively would be that, in using the oral contraceptive pills, the blood pressure be checked every 3 months, something which probably was not done systematically in the very beginning, perhaps because the pills are given primarily by gynecologists, perhaps because hypertension was not anticipated.

Senator NELSON. May I interrupt?

Dr. LARAGH. Yes.

Senator NELSON. You are suggesting that the blood pressure should be taken once every 3 months?

Dr. LARAGH. About every 2 or 3 months, yes.

Senator NELSON. We have had other testimony—in fact, I think all witnesses, whether they were somewhat or very critical of the pill, or in support of the pill, commented upon the importance of a physical examination once, at least, every 6 to 12 months, with a Pap smear, and so forth. Are you saying that you believe that that is too long a period?

Dr. LARAGH. That is much too long for the blood pressure, because you ought to know about it. It takes 1 minute, or a few minutes, to take the blood pressure, and somebody might have had it a whole year if you did that, in my opinion. I would recommend every 2 or 3 months.

Perhaps a Pap smear is another matter, but I would certainly favor having the blood pressure checked every 3 months.

Senator NELSON. But would you consider that—I am just trying to get your judgment—as the nearly perfect procedure? Would you consider it a serious matter if it were once every 6 months?

Dr. LARAGH. I would think that the logistics of taking the blood pressure are so simple that I would take it every 3 months.

Senator NELSON. The logistics are that you cannot find a place to park the car.

Dr. LARAGH. That is right. Well, we have a responsibility when we have our powerful drugs like this; our responsibility is to learn about them, and the second responsibility is to apply the information. Otherwise, we do not have any right to have them on the market.