

So the users carrying the prescription can get it filled on request. Now, they still may be getting the examination, I do not know, but this might raise a question as to whether they were.

Dr. HELLMAN. It can raise a question. I cannot speak for the medical practice in the United States, but I think all of us know that there are areas where it is excellent and there are areas where some change would be good.

I think one thing comes clear in these data that does not have anything to do with oral contraceptives. This is the decrease in deaths from cancer of the uterus in the United States since 1958.

Now, the disease has not changed. This can only mean that the cancer smear programs which are being carried out vigorously and the information being conveyed to all women, regardless of whether they are on the contraceptives or not, that they should have these examinations has been effective.

I know in my own practice, and it is tiny, but if I did not make periodic appointments with patients, they would call my secretary and want to know what is the matter. I am sure this happens very, very frequently.

Now, I think it is wrong to take the time for me to talk about the metabolic effects of these pills when we have some experts here who are going to testify on this very point. I will say this, that the committee, the task force under Dr. Corfman reviewed about 3,700 references to write the review that they wrote of the metabolic effects here. It is quite apparent, and I think somewhat unexpected to those of us who have lived through the development of the steroid hormones right from the beginning, that the hormones had such a widespread metabolic effect on the body.

Now, Dr. Wynn will talk to you, I believe, chiefly about the two that we know most about, namely, the effect on the use of sugar by the body and the effect on body fats. There are some others that we know a good deal about.

Again, the committee is faced with some biological data, meaning that certain things have been changed in the human body when you take oral contraceptives. These things also change for other reasons.

One of the things they change from is pregnancy. The carbohydrate metabolism is changed in pregnancy, the fat metabolism is changed in pregnancy, the levels of circulating fats go up.

What we do not have is the answer to the question, do these changes signify any health hazard to the individual? The committee has always been forthright in its statements and when it did not know, it said it did not know—said, "We do not know. We have to keep this matter under investigation."

I think it is heartening that the number of investigations into the metabolic effects of the steroids has multiplied tremendously. It has not only multiplied among the private sector and the scientists and doctors, but the drug houses themselves are carrying on a tremendous amount of research in this very area.

Senator DOLE. Dr. Hellman, when did you first prescribe the pill?

Dr. HELLMAN. Probably right after it was first introduced.

Senator DOLE. I just wonder how many patients you see now or how many you have seen personally who are "on the pill."

Dr. HELLMAN. Yes, sir.