

(11) BLOOD PRESSURE

Susceptible women may experience an increase in blood pressure following administration of contraceptive steroids.

Senator Nelson, I think the way this information is accumulating, and the way these requisite followup steps require the most vigilant medical attention, it will not be long until medical students will have to have another year in order to consider the complications of the pill, the way things are going.

What is not included in the "requisite practices for followup" is most interesting.

Mr. DUFFY. Dr. Williams, before you leave that section have you compared this list which you have just brought us with any other list associated with another drug product?

Dr. WILLIAMS. Oh, yes.

Mr. DUFFY. Is there any similarity between this letter say and some other drug products that you might be aware of?

Dr. WILLIAMS. Point for point I do not know.

Mr. DUFFY. A long list of contraindications, symptoms?

Dr. WILLIAMS. Sure, many drugs have long lists of contraindications.

Mr. DUFFY. So this really is not unusual?

Dr. WILLIAMS. Not unusual but it is unusual, Mr. Duffy, because we are not talking about drugs for control of disease.

Mr. DUFFY. What about tranquilizers? Dr. Kistner showed us something very similar.

Dr. WILLIAMS. I did not think Dr. Kistner really meant what he said when he said he prescribed tranquilizers for people who were perfectly well, and I do not think many doctors do. But it begs the question I think to say that there are other drugs with long lists of contraindications. We are talking about the most extensively used mass medication ever followed.

The doctor is not told that strokes occurring in women on the pill have almost always been preceded by a headache (not necessarily a migraine headache), or that fainting spells may be the signal. He is not reminded that thrombotic disease also includes mesenteric thrombosis (intestines), hepatic vein thrombosis (liver) of which there have been reported fatal cases, he is not reminded that it also includes arterial thrombosis, which may lead to a catastrophe in a leg, for example, and there have been amputations necessitated by that. He is not reminded that coronary thrombosis is also part of this thrombotic disease. He is not reminded that when changes in vision occur, or first signs of stroke appear, it may be too late already. The labeling implies that these catastrophes are generally reversible with cessation of medication. Fortunately many of them are, but there is no way to tell ahead of time.

The Chairman goes on:

When these potential hazards and the value of the drugs are balanced, the Committee finds the ratio of benefit to risk sufficiently high to justify the designation safe within the intent of the legislation.

These potential hazards are real hazards, they do not all materialize into damage, but they are real hazards. They present themselves daily,