

Promotion of The Pill has been facilitated through an unusually broad spectrum of activities and attitudes by many people. The principle that "ethical" drugs are not to be promoted to the public has been breached repeatedly and flagrantly. Salesmen were instructed:

Ask pharmacist to suggest to his customers and give them names of doctors in area who write for it.

Talk to *everyone* who will listen and give them the good news that easy child spacing is here.

After the adverse publicity about The Pill appeared in August, 1962, the salesmen of one company were told in a letter:

Many people believe that for a certain time period this will definitely slow down the number of requests by patients to physicians for Enovid therapy. As you well know, this is our main and major source of increased and continued acceptance of the drug.

The detail man is the foot soldier of the "ethical" drug industry. It is his job to get the doctors' confidence, and to extoll the virtues, and counteract the shortcomings, of his company's products. Although he has done his job well with The Pill, overcoming real adversities from time to time, he has had a lot of help from the press and other interested parties. Many obstetrician-gynecologists have given him assistance as they have enjoyed their exalted position, created in no small measure by the tenor of promotional efforts, as the ultimate experts about any and everything related to The Pill.

Much of the press, as pointed out by Morton Mintz in a fine presentation of the history of reporting of The Pill's problems in the Columbia Journalism Review last spring, has refrained from reporting adverse stories while enthusiastically publishing innumerable accounts of its marvels and reaffirmations of its alleged safety. Many newspaper columns and magazine articles have seemed to be little different from paid advertising. As recently as June 12, 1969 one syndicated physician columnist wrote, in part:

Before contraceptive pills were distributed to the general public, untold control studies were done to be sure of their safety. This is one of the great responsibilities of government health agencies which constantly protect the American people from the "overenthusiasm" for new drugs by their manufacturers.

... We must not permit ourselves to be terrified into believing that our health and lives are in jeopardy every time we read scare statistics that have no solid basis in scientific truth.

Just two months later the Second Report on Oral Contraceptives came out, finally giving some "solid basis in scientific truth," with its own scary data.

The pro-Pill press has repeatedly accepted—apparently on faith—the assumption, generated by The Pill promoters, that it is safe. Personal advice columnists, city editors, science writers and others have adopted, almost without question, the assertion of safety. Sometimes, it seems, they made their own decision that benefits outstripped the risks, regardless of what the latter eventually were shown to be.

Prominent physicians long identified with Pill promotion have actively advanced the cause, often with dogmatic denials of the Pill's dangers, often with exaggerated rebuttals of the danger alarms (e.g. The Pill is safer than pregnancy), and often with irrelevant analogies and misstatements of facts, calculated to obfuscate the issues. For example, Dr. Louis Hellman has been quoted many times as saying "Taking oral contraceptives is about as hazardous as smoking three cigarettes a day," and "There is not even scant evidence to show correlation between the pill and cancer."

The technique of counter-scare has been employed by some physicians indulging in gross exaggerations. In the December 30, 1969 issue of the San Francisco Chronicle Dr. Bernard Nathanson of Cornell was quoted in respect to what he called "second time arounders." They are "girls frightened off the pill by scare articles who come in for a diaphragm, get pregnant, end up in the hands of an abortionist and come back chagrined and chastened, and decide that The Pill is less risky than ending up on some kitchen table." Dr. Kistner said that The Pill "is safer than pregnancy" and that "mortality is of the same order of magnitude with IUDs as with The Pill."

The Pill has been promoted by devious devices which have lessened the impact of bad news on physicians and their prescription buying patients. Medical reports adverse to the safety of The Pill have been suppressed or delayed in many instances, so that there would be time for forgetting between installments.