

due to these pregnancies will amount to 30 to 300 per year. Let us now look at the newer methods. The intrauterine device is much more effective than any of the older methods. Of a million women using it for a year, only about 50,000 can expect to get pregnant, and there will be only about 12-60 deaths from the pregnancies. But there are also deaths caused by the intrauterine device—a fact that its advocates like to play down. Indeed this fact is consistently omitted from the writings of the chief American statistician concerned with clinical trials of the IUD. It was brought to light by a survey conducted by the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists while the advocates of the IUD were busy looking at other things. The fact is, that there may be about 24 deaths per million users per year from the IUD itself. Then there are the deaths associated with the 50,000 pregnancies. Together, these two factors add up to about 40-80 deaths per million users per year. Now consider the Pill. It is far more effective than the IUD, and only about 10,000 pregnancies per million women can be expected. These pregnancies will cause 3-15 deaths. Now if the risk of thromboembolism is accepted at full face value, one may anticipate 12-24 pill-related deaths per million users, depending on whether the lower rate of the American studies or the higher rate of the British studies is accepted. Thus the total number of deaths, those from pregnancy plus those from the Pill; adds up to about 15-40 per million users per year—less than with any other form of contraception. These figures are summed up in the following table:

THE RISKS OF PREGNANCY
[In a million reproductive-age women per year]

Pregnancies (number)	Deaths, total	Cause	
		Pregnancy itself	The contraceptive
No contraceptive (800,000).....	200-1,000	200-1,000	-----
Rhythm method (230,000).....	60-300	60-300	None
Diaphragm (200,000).....	56-280	56-280	None
Condom (100,000).....	28-140	28-140	None
Intrauterine device (50,000).....	40-80	12-60	24
The pill (10,000).....	15-40	3-15	12-24

Note: It becomes clear, when all the risks are considered, that taking the pill is the safest thing a woman at risk of becoming pregnant can do.

These figures show only the bare bones of the problem. They do not take into account the fact that healthy women who become pregnant against their will often resort to criminal abortion. The sickness and death from this awful alternative cannot even be calculated. Yet it is a known risk to the fertile woman who contracepts unsuccessfully. On top of all this, how can one measure, and how can one throw into the scales the anxiety, fear, frigidity, marital discord and infidelity that are generated by the fears of unwanted pregnancy and uncertain contraceptives? Perhaps such human values cannot be measured by statistics; perhaps our ivory-tower statisticians and biologists can ignore them, but the physician—the man who must deal with women-at-risk face to face—cannot. And they should count heavily in the scales of his judgment.

Some people have compared the death rate from drugs such as penicillin, digitalis, smallpox vaccination with the deaths allegedly due to the oral contraceptives. It may be argued that such comparisons are invalid, because these other drugs are taken to cure or prevent disease, and we have not yet come to consider pregnancy as a disease, even though it is sometimes fatal. Let it be agreed that taking Pills is a procedure elected by free choice by some women. How do the risks of this free choice compare with other free choices we make in our daily lives? If the death rate from the Pill plus the death rate from pregnancies associated with pill failure is 15-40 per million women per year, it is interesting to note that the death rate in women from smoking is 400 per million per year. Looking at it another way, the full claimed risk of the Pill itself is equivalent to the risk of a British woman smoking $\frac{1}{3}$ of a cigarette per day, or of an American woman smoking a little more than 1 cigarette per week. Another thing we all do is to drive in cars. The death rate from traffic accidents of women of this age group is 370 per million per year. Some of us also like