

If it were shown that the progestational agent was chiefly responsible for side effects, which we did not want to have, then the advantage of a sequential pill would be that there would be a lesser amount of the progestational agent.

In my opinion, and it is strictly my opinion, the estrogen is more responsible, is responsible for more problems than the progestational agents.

Senator McINTYRE. Doctor, you point out that thus far no steroid with contraceptive action has been found to be free of metabolic effects.

As we have heard from many other witnesses, some of the metabolic side effects of the hormonal contraceptives have long-term effects on the health of the individuals to whom they are administered.

Do you think the chances are pretty good that further research will be able to produce a steroid that has contraceptive properties without metabolic side effects or do you think that the chances for such a discovery are slight?

Dr. SALHANICK. I think we may find contraceptive steroids which will be effective which have minimal side effects. I do not think we will find a contraceptive which is absolutely devoid of side effects and, as we learn more about the implications of the side effects, I would become more comfortable with this area of investigation, and that is one of the reasons why I urge the investigation of other methods of contraception as well.

Senator McINTYRE. You think, Doctor, that it would be a good idea to direct a larger portion of our limited research capabilities to a search for nonsteroidal contraceptives so we do not end up with all of our eggs in what may turn out to be an empty basket? [Laughter.]

Dr. SALHANICK. Yes. I think we should do both, but with eight and a half million women committed to the pill, I think we have to put some tremendous efforts into that also.

Senator McINTYRE. Doctor Salhanick, you indicate that the practice of equating the pharmacological state induced by the oral contraceptive with the biological state, such as pregnancy, is invalid and should be abandoned.

Some of our witnesses have made the point that, although there are serious known potential risks associated with the use of the pill, such risks are justified because the risks of pregnancy itself are greater. Do you think that this is a valid comparison?

Dr. SALHANICK. No, sir, I do not; not as a generalization.

I think many women, many couples, can use alternate methods of contraception, and I think there are other alternatives to the contraceptive agents for some people.

Now, for some people there are not other alternatives, and in that case the physician involved has to make a decision of does this couple have any alternatives than to the use of the pill.

Senator McINTYRE. Doctor, you point out that the amount of progesterones in some of the oral contraceptives has been reduced to about one-tenth of the minimal dose, and estrogen to about one-third without loss of contraceptive effect.

The British authorities, on the basis of studies there showing that the high-estrogen pills carry a higher risk of serious side effects, have recommended the use of the high-estrogen products be discontinued.