

Senator DOLE. Dr. Corfman, you mentioned earlier, I think, or you were present when some of the questions were raised from the floor and I am not trying to get into some of those, but if there were any of a medical nature that you might comment on it might be helpful for the record.

Were there any other questions raised that might deserve comment? You said there were a number of important questions.

Dr. CORFMAN. The only other medical one I remember was the question of the issue of abortion which was raised several times by the speakers.

Senator DOLE. Do you want to comment on that?

Dr. CORFMAN. It is certainly an important and difficult subject. We have great interest in this at NIH. We have some studies underway attempting to answer what sounds like a very simple question: How many abortions are performed in this country every year? We have no good idea about this.

Abortion is a subject of great importance to those of us interested in contraception. Moral issues aside, a good argument can be developed which shows that abortion for failed contraception decreases the need for very effective contraceptives. Perhaps one reason we are in a bind on oral contraceptives is that our laws on abortion make it necessary to use very effective contraceptive methods.

Senator DOLE. I think it was last night's news where there was a comment about some package trip from New York to England for \$1,250. It included roundtrip tickets and an abortion, which again indicates or pinpoints the problem you just mentioned.

Thank you.

Mr. GORDON. This question is for Dr. Seigel. Suppose for a moment that you had a 100-percent increase in deaths as a result of taking the pill—or perhaps the lives of women are decreased by, say, 5 years.

Dr. SEIGEL. Did you say decreased?

Mr. GORDON. Decreased by 5 years.

Is there any way to detect this?

Dr. SEIGEL. You were saying a 100-percent increase in mortality for women using the pill?

Mr. GORDON. That is correct, yes; twice as many women die or a woman's life is decreased by 5 years. Is there any way to detect it?

Dr. SEIGEL. Let me answer the first question first. I think it is a little easier. There are something like 20 percent of the population, of the women in the reproductive ages, using the pill. If these 20 percent should have an increase in total mortality of 100 percent, this would have an effect upon the overall mortality on the order of 20 percent. This kind of change in mortality for women would certainly be detectable.

The kind of increment in mortality that one might expect as a result of an increase of the order of seven times for thromboembolic disorders is not easily detectable in the overall mortality because these deaths are such a small percentage of all deaths. I do not think anyone has hypothesized that it is likely that the mortality would be doubled from all causes in women on the pill, but if that were ever to take place we would certainly know it.