

Many physicians in the family-planning field have charged that the hearings were heavily stacked in favor of pill critics who overemphasized the health hazards that are at best speculative.

Just prior to the hearings, the long-simmering debate about the pill's safety became intensified with the publication of several books and lay articles and the presentation of broadcasts proclaiming the pill to be dangerous.

SOME REACTIONS TO REPORTS

"Unfortunately," Dr. Orcutt said, "many women who heard and read these reports stopped the pill without calling their doctors and without using any other form of contraception."

Interviews with obstetricians in various parts of the country disclosed that, of the women who did call their doctors, many decided to stay with the pill after being told that the Senate hearings had produced no new evidence of health hazards.

But a far greater number of women, these physicians said, were so disturbed and upset by the reports that they decided to switch to other methods of contraception.

Many doctors reported "a run on diaphragms" and, to a lesser extent, on intrauterine devices (IUD's). A check of pharmacies in and around New York disclosed a small but significant increase in the sales of contraceptive foams, jellies and creams and condoms, and a definite falling off in sales of oral contraceptives.

Dr. Nathan Chaste, a Providence, R. I., urologist, said he has had a tripling in requests for male sterilization procedures (vasectomies) since the Senate hearings.

Several doctors interviewed said that the turn away from oral contraceptives would not cause too many problems among middle-class and upperclass women who, for the most part, are highly motivated to use other contraceptive methods effectively and who could support another child or obtain an abortion should an unwanted conception occur.

"But among clinic patients, who cannot afford another child and cannot back up a contraceptive failure with abortion, the defection from the pill to less effective methods could be disastrous," a spokesman for Planned Parenthood of New York said.

Dr. Edwin Daily, director of the city's Maternal and Infant Care program, said that the percentage of new patients who requested and received oral contraceptives dropped from 68 per cent in December to 47 per cent during the last week in January.

Dr. Daily pointed out that, except for sterilization, the pill is the most effective contraceptive currently available.

[From the Washington Post, Feb. 21, 1970]

BAD PUBLICITY AND "THE PILL"

(By Wayne Eisenman)

NEW YORK.—Druggists across the country say recent testimony against birth control pills has alarmed many women but sales of the pill have not lagged significantly yet.

Some pharmacists reported, however, that demand for other contraceptives is up.

Results of an Associated Press sampling indicate it may be too early to assess the impact of scientists' claims before a Senate subcommittee last month that oral contraceptives may be harmful to health.

"Most women buy three-to-six-month supplies, so we wouldn't see an instant drop," noted a spokesman for a Los Angeles pharmacy. The pill usually comes in batches for a month or more.

"We've had no decline . . . but people have been asking whether or not the pill is safe," said a Little Rock, Ark., pharmacist in a typical comment.

Some druggists reported a decline in new prescriptions for the pill since the subcommittee hearings. But they said most women who were taking the pill before the hearings continued to refill their prescriptions.