

Senator DOLE. All the instances of who gain weight, of dizzy spells, were not totally attributable to the pill, right?

Dr. BALL. That is so. Right. But on the other hand, the evidence that I had was, here were women in large numbers ailing, coming to an internist with problems, and if you removed the pill, they were better. That is pretty good evidence.

Senator DOLE. It may very well be.

You suggest that perhaps there is a double standard for men and women. As I understand from earlier testimony, there is work being done now on a male pill but I am not certain what stage it is in.

Dr. BALL. I know no facts about it. I read in medical journals occasionally that there are such medications that are being tried out.

Senator DOLE. If there is such a pill available in say a year or two, then, of course, we can make a judgment whether we would ask men to accept the same hazard as you say we ask women to accept.

Would you prescribe the pill in any event now?

Dr. BALL. I have not, no. In fact, for treating problems like endometriosis and abnormal bleeding and so on that fall more into the gynecologist's line, the doses used are often higher and it has been my experience that the problems are greater, being somewhat dose-related.

Senator DOLE. As Dr. McCain pointed out, he places the pill in a low priority category. You do not place it in any category at all?

Dr. BALL. No category at all, that is right. But I practice very well without it.

Senator DOLE. You conclude that the risks far outweigh the benefits and therefore, you suggest a 5-year moratorium on the pill itself to discover whether the symptoms are lasting?

Dr. BALL. That is right. I feel that the vast majority of this 8.5 million women are being basically unsupervised in their taking of the pill; that is, as far as any accurate statistical analysis.

Senator DOLE. I detect from your statement that you are as critical in a proper sense of the doctors as you are of the pill. Can I infer that if doctors were well-versed in the use of the pill and they were supervising their patients as they should be, then perhaps the pill could be given with some certainty or safety?

Dr. BALL. In my opinion, this would be better than it is now.

For instance, if, as Senator Nelson suggested, perhaps a list of side effects were dispensed with the pill, this would be of some benefit—not, in my opinion, enough; but it would be of some benefit.

There is one other problem about this depression, fatigue, and so on of these women. Many times you can ask a woman and she might not either know it or say it. Therefore, to interrogate her, to question her, will do you little good. You would miss a good percentage of them. In fact, in a fair number of these women, the husband will call me separately, and say, "My God, do something about my wife, she has just turned into a bitch."

So in other words—or the mother or the mother-in-law. I never particularly listen to mothers-in-law, but these problems are often stated by other members of the family who have observed a total change in personality.

Senator DOLE. Do you have a standard response when you get those calls?