

question, some of them not taking these medications for contraceptive purposes, but for others. I have had several patients who decided not to use the pill in the light of the publicity associated with these disclosures.

Senator DOLE. I am not saying we should not have held the hearings but am trying to determine what your own experience has been to the reaction?

Dr. RYAN. I might say this is not too different from the kinds of experiences we have had over the last 4 or 5 years every time a new article comes out in any of the lay press. As I said in my introduction, public pronouncements always seem to come out with more rhetoric than objectivity. It is extremely difficult to get the balance in for a patient. In general, it is not the most ideal way for the patient to be informed about her decisions in health matters concerning herself. I think it can give her information which she can then use in discussing it with her physician or clinic.

Senator DOLE. At least she is alerted to some of the potential problems or speculative problems.

Did you have a question?

Mr. GORDON. Yes.

As I understand it, you do not think there is anything wrong with people asking questions about it, do you?

Dr. RYAN. Absolutely not.

Mr. GORDON. Does it not take the physician off the hook, in a way, when people start asking questions?

Dr. RYAN. Practicing physicians very seldom, in a sense, get off the hook. We cannot, you know, delegate some of the responsibilities we assume in patient care. I think well-informed patients are a pleasure to deal with.

Mr. GORDON. And also you mention the fact that when you go down to the lunchroom, doctors ask themselves, well, what do you think, what shall we do, and so forth? Don't you think that is good?

Dr. RYAN. I think it is, yes. I was not making judgments on the propriety of whether or not people should ask questions or whether or not they should be informed. There is no question in my mind that most of the public pronouncements on the pill have involved rhetoric and scare because they come out with, the pill causes cancer or something, as the snap headline. Then, if you are industrious enough to read the whole article, you will get down to the bottom and see that there were animal models or something of this nature that were involved. This has been going on in relationship to the pill, as I say, almost from the time it has been on the market, and the rhetoric for and against it has been of equal quality in terms of informing people.

Senator DOLE. A lot of it may depend on who is asking the questions. If you were sitting up here and another doctor were the witness, you could probably ask very meaningful questions. Maybe Mr. Gordon has not had that problem. Maybe he is an expert in this area.

Mr. GORDON. Thank you.

Senator DOLE. The basic weakness probably is that we lack the expertise and we may, therefore, unintentionally present an improper picture.