

Senator NELSON. What do your clinics tell the user of the pill?

Dr. GUTTMACHER. I think I have said in my testimony that I cannot say, because I do not visit the clinics and see them operate, so I cannot tell you how much time is spent by each physician or nurse who is instructing patients as to the adverse reactions that might stem from the pill. I am moderately certain that if a patient asks questions, they are answered as frankly as the respondent can do it. But at the same time, I think I would be dishonest if I tried to tell you that every time a patient is given a packet of pills, the dispenser tells the patient about the difficulties. I cannot tell you this.

Senator NELSON. I thought you referred, when the literature was handed out—

Dr. GUTTMACHER. I think the literature covers this. This is covered by the literature. I am certain that if a doctor is terribly busy and the patient does not ask questions, he does not pause too long to tell her about the potential dangers. Perhaps he should.

Senator NELSON. I really think I should have said what is the patient told, what is the patient given orally, or—

Dr. GUTTMACHER. They are given both oral and written information. Of course, the oral information helps them choose what method of birth control they are going to select.

Senator NELSON. In your own judgment, if a woman decides to use the pill, should she be told anything about the side effects, number one?

Number two, should she be advised of any untoward symptoms which should cause her to consult a doctor?

Dr. GUTTMACHER. I strongly feel that if you are prescribing a pill to a patient who is not knowledgeable, you have the necessity to tell her that in very rare instances, there are clots formed in vessels which apparently are due to this drug, and that sometimes very dangerous situations may develop. I would tell her that this is mathematically most unlikely to occur. I would tell her that if there is any departure from her normal health picture, the pill might be responsible for these changes in her feeling of well-being, and that under all such conditions, she should promptly get in touch with the proper medical authority who dispensed the pill.

I would not, probably, tell her about cancer, because I think this is totally unproved. I do not think I would tell her about genetic changes, because this is totally unproved. I doubt very much whether I would tell her that her blood lipid are going up or there are going to be changes in liver—

Senator NELSON. Would you tell her that the incidence of thromboembolism, according to Dr. Lynd's study in England, was 9 times as great?

Dr. GUTTMACHER. Oh, yes, I think that is well documented. I am not sure I would use—it is 5 against 45.

Senator NELSON. That is right.

Now, would you tell her about the symptoms to observe? That is, if she experienced temporary blindness, migraine headaches, erythema, swollen legs, all of these things—would you tell her about those symptoms and advise her that, upon the showing of a certain set of symptoms, she should consult a doctor?