

along with this indication that a family history of cancer of the breast should constitute a red flag indicating that the pill is not a first-choice contraceptive.

Now, on this X-ray of the breast, do you have any idea of the frequency with which this is being done now?

Dr. CUTLER. It is being done very frequently. X-ray examination of the breast has been known for some 30 years. But it is only in the last 10 years and more particularly, in the last 5 years, where the technique has improved to such a degree and the accuracy of interpretation has improved that it has become widely used. Very often, when a doctor does not recommend a mammogram, the patient will come in and ask for one. It is being widely used and more and more used. And it is still in its relative infancy. There are improvements going on almost every month in the apparatus and technique and interpretation, and we can hope for much more accuracy as time goes on.

Senator McINTYRE. Would you be able to state how frequently it is being done in women who are users of the pill?

Dr. CUTLER. Whether it is being done more often with users?

Senator McINTYRE. Yes.

Dr. CUTLER. I have no knowledge of that. I do not know. I have recommended that it be used among my patients and friends and colleagues.

Senator McINTYRE. Thank you very much, Doctor.

Senator NELSON. Well, for a patient on the sustained dosage of estrogens, how often would you yourself recommend that there be a mammogram done?

Dr. CUTLER. How often should it be done? Well, I think that it would be very wise if it could be done once a year. That is not too often to be concerned about any exposure to X-rays. And I think it would be very useful. There are many of us who recommend annual mammograms even for those who are not taking the pill.

Senator NELSON. So you recommend in your testimony that a user of the oral contraceptive have a regular physical exam, which includes a breast examination. How often are you suggesting that the regular exam be given?

Dr. CUTLER. Most physicians and much of the teaching speak of annual examinations. Now, I have been doing this work for some 40 years and I have always recommended to my patients that they have their breasts examined a minimum of twice a year, preferably four times a year. And I do that because it is not infrequent when I see a patient 6 months after a previous examination, to find a cancer of the breast. Actually, I have currently under my care approximately 1,000 patients who come regularly every 3 or 4 months.

I also find that the reassurance that they get from this examination seems to be great, evidenced by the fact that they keep coming back year after year. I do find many early cancers by this method.

Senator NELSON. Many what?

Dr. CUTLER. I do discover many cancers in their early stages by these frequent examinations.

Senator NELSON. I was wondering if you understood my question correctly, when I inquired what the recommendation would be for physical examination which would include breast examination of a