

With the widespread use of the oral contraceptives—the pill—iatrogenic disease has hit epidemic proportions. The reason for this is clear. Up until now physicians, for the most part, have only been producing iatrogenic disease as a byproduct of treating the already sick person. For the first time in medicine’s history, however, the drug industry has placed at our disposal a powerful, disease-producing chemical for use in the healthy rather than the sick.

In 1969, this made available to the medical profession a target of 8½ million healthy women in the prime of life. We have had no better target for making obvious our talent for producing iatrogenic disease. How have we made out?

The following represent numbers of healthy women who have become diseased as the result of using the pill.

The first estimates are based on data from the national fertility study carried out for the Public Health Service by Westhoff, of Princeton, and Ryder, of Wisconsin.¹

I have listed what they found and I will not spell it out because I think everybody here has a copy. But on the day they made this interview they asked people what symptoms they had, which their doctors attributed to the pill. It resulted in 1,603,500 episodes of disease, which is a ratio of about one out of five, which fits in with a lot of other figures we have on the incidence of complications from the pill.

(The information follows:)

	Cases
Thromboembolism (total)-----	4, 306
hospitalized cases of pulmonary embolism-----	2, 238
Of women who remained on the pill, and whose symptoms were recorded at the time of the interview:	
Weight change, fluid retention, breast tenderness or nausea, accounted for-----	1, 122, 000
Spotting, hemorrhage, irregularity or cramps accounted for----	209, 000
Headaches and/or nervousness accounted for-----	272, 500
Total-----	1, 603, 500

Dr. RATNER. Newsweek reported that of the women asked about complication, 51 percent of them said they had complications. It is on this basis, since they were healthy to begin with, that one is concerned about the extent of iatrogenic disease caused by the pill.

The following estimates of incidence are conservative and are applied to the 8½ million women on the pill in 1969. The basis for them can be found in either the Medical Hazards of the Pill or supplementary literature. All disease conditions are not represented, nor are most of the more than 50 metabolic abnormalities represented.

For instance, in this paper I omitted chloasma, abnormal pigmentation of the skin—usually of a permanent nature—which occurs in 29 percent of the women on the pill. This means that 1,650,000 women end up with disfiguring skin pigmentation, not previously present, brought about basically by mechanisms associated with the adrenal glands.

¹ See reference 1 of Bibliography, beginning at p. 6757.