

Despite Dr. Guttmacher's testimony last week that the majority of physicians acquaint their patients with the complications of the pill, this is not true. The Newsweek-Gallup poll, February 9, 1970, a source which Dr. Guttmacher used to illustrate the "great alarm" caused by these hearings, reported that a "startling two-thirds of pill-taking women say they have never been told about possible hazards by their physicians." It is on this basis that Newsweek states that the "subcommittee's concern was well founded, that women were inadequately informed."

It is my experience as a public health physician that this is the case. The literature contains many accounts of pill pushing and 6-month prescriptions in both Government and private birth control programs.⁶ The pill is probably the most casually refilled prescription ever written. Numerous women are taking the pill who are no longer under medical supervision.

And I can show you letters and give you names to support this, because I have been on radio and television, frequently, on the medical hazards of the pill and this is what you constantly hear from women in response, for example that some doctor in Seattle will refill a prescription over the phone for a patient who has moved to San Francisco and the woman never sees a physician again until she develops a complication.

The real panic makers are those supporters of the pill who are trying to make the pill appear safe by exaggerating the dangers of pregnancy. They are contributing to panic in three ways:

1. By frightening women about the alleged ineffectiveness of methods of birth control other than the pill.
2. By threatening instant pregnancy for those going off the pill.
3. By portraying pregnancy as a pathologic state with a high incidence of deaths. Such dramatization, I assure you, is no comfort to millions of women in the United States presently pregnant or considering pregnancy.

Mr. GORDON. How many women died from pregnancy in any given year?

Dr. RATNER. I will have to give you a little—

Mr. GORDON. If you do not have the figures, would you please send it to us?

Dr. RATNER. Yes, I just have to give you a little background, because I think this is very important.

Even the English point out that without the pill—over the last 30 years, this applies to the United States as well—the average number of children the family has is between two and three children. Let us call it three children. That means over a reproductive period of 30 years, they are only having on the average one child every 10 years. Therefore, when you talk about death from the pill, three per hundred thousand, and contrast it to the higher overall death rate from pregnancy per year it is not as if the woman is exposed to the risk of having a baby every year as she is to the pill every year. She just is not having a baby yearly and has not from time immemorial and has had only three to four babies totally on the average since certainly the early part of the century. So there is misunderstanding—

⁶ See reference 6 of Bibliography.