

APPENDIX IV

ARTICLES

[From The New York Post, February 14, 1970]

SURVEY LINKS THE PILL TO CANCER

(By Barbara Yuncker)

A "significantly higher" number of very early cancers of the cervix has been found in a study of New York women who use oral birth control pills, compared with similar women who use diaphragms, The Post learned today.

The still-unpublished report, involving nearly 35,000 women, stresses that the finding provides no proof of cause and effect. Other factors, particularly involving patterns of sexual behavior, may be as likely as causes, if not more so. But this is not expected to avert a new, major debate on the pill's safety.

The details of the study have been presented privately to the contraceptive advisory committee of the Food and Drug Administration which has found "nothing to confirm or refute" a theory that "The Pill" might cause such cell changes. It has not suggested any new FDA warning on the basis of this or other related reports, and FDA Commissioner Ley and other officials are understood to concur in this view at this time.

EARLY FORM CURABLE

When "Pap smear" tests were done on all 35,000 (who were clients at Planned Parenthood clinics) and followup biopsies were done on suspicious cases, 266 "carcinomas in situ" were found. (This is the earliest, most curable form of cancer of the female reproductive organs.)

Matching the users of the two methods for age, ethnic background, child-bearing history and economic status, the researchers found about twice as many cases of early cancer among the pill-users. Because they outnumbered those using diaphragms by about four to one, they were matched in one/one, one/two and one/three groupings, with slightly different results, but a consistent pattern.

A principal reason why cause-and-effect cannot be assumed from this study is that earlier research, cited in this report, has shown that cervical cancer is higher in women with early sexual experience on frequent intercourse or many partners, or repeated pregnancies. It is rare among nuns, relatively high among prostitutes.

But because of the kinds of women involved and the fact that they were volunteers from the clients of Planned Parenthood, it was not considered appropriate—or even particularly revealing—to investigate earliest sexual experience or number of partners, beyond what could be deduced from marital and pregnancy histories.

VIRUS A CAUSE?

Another lively area of cervical cancer research, suggesting that a virus may be a causative factor, is not directly involved in this study but is given suggestive support because the diaphragm could be a barrier against such infection. It could also be a barrier if simple lack of hygiene is involved, which other studies have indicated as a possibility.

The study was directed by Dr. Myron R. Melamed, pathologist at Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center, and Dr. Hilliard Dubrow, obstetrician and cancer research adviser to Planned Parenthood of New York City. He is on