

the final figures on the clotting studies. Much in the manner of British Health Minister Kenneth Robinson, Dr. Hellman admitted that a cause-effect relation with clotting had been "established" but characterized the risk—the risk now found to be seven to ten times greater in Pill users than in non-users—as "very, very small." Not for three months was the actual degree of risk known. In any event, Dr. Hellman's disclosure and acceptance of the existence of a cause-effect relationship was important news.

Appropriate emphasis to it was given by, among others, all of the daily newspapers in Washington, *The Associated Press*, and *Medical Tribune* (but not by *The New York Times*). Then came a bizarre development. In a story on February 27 by Herbert Black and Carl M. Cobb in *The Boston Globe* there was a paragraph in which Dr. Hellman seemed to back down:

Dr. Hellman has been quoted as seeing a cause-and-effect relationship in the British study. Hellman told the *Globe*: "The study has demonstrated a very real relationship, but is *only suggestive* of a cause-and-effect relationship [my italics]."

But this repudiation, if that is what it was, was itself repudiated on May 2 when Dr. Hellman told Barbara Walters on *Today*:

Well, Barbara, I think the British data is [sic] *conclusive*. I think that it *proves*, and this is a new item, *conclusively* what we have suspected for some time, that there is a cause and effect relationship between the taking of oral contraceptives and lung clots [my italics].

The Searle firm has been phenomenally profitable, thanks in great part to its oral contraceptive products. In 1964, for example, after-tax net earnings were \$12.2 million, or 28.2 percent on sales. In 1967, in the *Journal* of the American Medical Association and in *OB-GYN*, a medical specialty publication, Searle published advertisements for Ovulen-21. Because they omitted a change in the FDA-approved labeling, which the company had agreed to, that emphasized the possibility of "serious hazards" from clotting diseases in the legs, lungs, and eyes, the FDA found the ads "potentially misleading." Under threat of more severe action by the agency, Searle on January 26, 1968, apologized in a remedial letter to every doctor in the country. The letter admitted that the ads:

"... failed to include the following side effects which, although causation has not been established, have been reported in users of oral contraceptives: anovulation post treatment premenstrual-like syndrome, changes in libido, changes in appetite, cystitis-like syndrome, backache, nervousness, dizziness, fatigue, headache, hirsutism."

All such corrective letters, no matter what the drug, are unarguably news. *The Washington Post* treats them as such. Other news media do not. They thus withhold the benefits of disclosure, which they regularly praise in other circumstances. In the case of letters such as Searle's, patients are deprived of the possibly vital knowledge that their physician may have been deceived about a drug he prescribed for them.

Until the FDA cracked down in the fall of 1967, most of the makers of The Pill had prepared pamphlets for customers at what might be called the point of sale—that is, in doctors' waiting rooms. These pamphlets generated pressure on doctors—sometimes by omitting full information on warnings and side effects, or by phrasing such information in language the patient was not likely to understand.

The Searle firm's efforts to build the market for The Pill have taken other paths, too. Through support of something called Interscience Information, Inc., it operates the pro-Pill Women's Medical News Service. It has given annual grants to Dr. J. Ernest Ayre, medical director of the National Cancer Cytology Center, Inc., who has pushed the brand-name Enovid in press releases and interviews. (Dr. Ayre also was medical consultant to the Rand Development Corporation, which in December, 1968, was indicted for mail fraud and stock fraud in connection with its promotion of a purported cancer vaccine.)

The Searle Foundation has contributed (\$17,000 in 1964, for example) to the Wilson Research Foundation, Inc., headed by Dr. Robert A. Wilson, the author of *Feminine Forever*. Dr. Wilson claimed that The Pill—he usually mentioned a formulation containing a progestogen used only in Enovid—could make sex more enjoyable "regardless of age." This kind of wild claim, which Dr. Wilson