

cluded: "We submit that the evidence we have produced, added to what has been reported previously, supports the conclusion that further study is indicated."

Dr. Joseph F. Sadusk, Jr., director of the FDA's Bureau of Medicine, says it is hard to evaluate a cause-and-effect relationship from a case history. However, he says, if conditions do appear, a doctor should stop birth control medication to evaluate the effects the drug may have on the trouble. A study on the long-term safety of oral contraceptives is being planned by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development to evaluate their effects on women and on children later born to those who had used them.

Although some studies of oral contraceptives have been under way for as long as 10 years, no studies have covered the usual 25-to-30-year span during which a woman can bear children. It is not known, therefore, what effects 20 or 30 years of use might have. Because in prescribing oral contraceptives a doctor is giving medicine to a person who is not ill, some physicians believe a patient is needlessly taking a chance on developing side effects, possibly serious ones. Such physicians admittedly express a minority view, but they say they prefer to prescribe other birth control methods. Since the last *Good Housekeeping* report, some authorities have indicated the importance of caution in prescribing the pills, for recognizing uncommon side effects and for further intensive study of their safety. For example:

Dr. Sherif S. Shafey, a neurologist at the University of Miami School of Medicine, says the most common neurological problem found in patients on oral contraceptives at the school's Cerebrovascular Disease Clinical Research Center is migraine headache. "A number of these patients," he says, "have never experienced in the past such headaches until they were taking the pills." Dr. Shafey says the patients became symptom-free when the pills were discontinued. Dr. Shafey says a cooperative study to collect data from different medical centers where patients are on oral contraceptives has been organized. Its aim, Dr. Shafey says, is to alert physicians and patients using the pills to the possibility of occurrence of such problems so that, by early detection, serious complications may be averted.

Dr. James A. Shannon, director of the National Institutes of Health, told a congressional hearing last year that "there are a great many studies on experimental animals that indicate that they (the pills) probably can be taken without hazard, but there has not been adequate human exploration to be certain." When asked if he believed that people are really taking a chance in using oral contraceptives, he replied: "I believe so." Late last year, a spokesman said that Dr. Shannon's views on the subject remain the same.

Dr. John R. McCain, professor of obstetrics and gynecology at Emory University in Atlanta, said during a recent regional meeting of the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists he would hesitate to prescribe any oral contraceptive for his patients. One area he is particularly concerned about is mental disturbances. He said he has seen seven cases of mental disturbance which started in women taking the pills and ended when the patients stopped taking them.

The relationship between taking oral contraceptives and blood clots is under investigation in Europe. For instance, the British Committee on Safety of Drugs reported that in a 12-month period ending in August, 1965, there were 16 deaths due to thromboembolic (blood clot) episodes in women taking oral contraceptives. The committee estimated that 13 such deaths could normally be expected in the same period in a comparable population of women not taking the pills. However, it drew no firm conclusion and urged doctors to continue to report such cases. "In the meantime," it said, "the committee do not feel justified in objecting to the marketing of oral contraceptives."

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ONE NOTED AUTHORITY SAYS:—"YES, I'LL STILL PRESCRIBE THE PILLS"

(By Dr. Alan F. Guttmacher)

As President of Planned Parenthood Federation, I feel a deep responsibility to seven million young women throughout the world who are using oral contraceptives to regulate the size of their families. Ever since the pills were