

We are trying to offer the facts so that women can exercise a truly free choice and make decisions for themselves. And we are trying to create a forum here for meaningful discussion of these facts.

We are not opposed to oral contraceptives for men or for women. We are opposed to unsafe contraceptives foisted on uninformed women for the profit of the drug and medical industries and for the convenience of men. (Opening statement of Washington Women's Liberation on Saturday, March 7, 1970, at Women's Hearings on the Birth Control Pill.)

EXCERPTS FROM TESTIMONY AT WOMEN'S HEARINGS ON THE PILL,
MARCH 7, 1970, WASHINGTON, D.C.

Barbara Seaman, a medical columnist for two women's magazines and author of "The Doctors' Case Against the Pill" said the pill side effects she found most disturbing were personality changes, depression, irritability and fatigue. She said she was alarmed, too, at reports of broken, sore or distended veins and fatal blood clots. This evidence, plus the possibility that the pill leads to cancer and sterility, makes up too strong a case against using oral contraceptives, she said. Many women said they were confronted with a blank wall when they complained of side effects to their doctors. Most doctors just laughed and prescribed other medications to counteract the side effects.

Mrs. Seaman said when news had got around that she had drafted a book about the suppression of evidence about the pill, the drug industry tried to keep it from being published. Before she had even seen the galley, she said, five sets had been xeroxed and circulated outside the publishing house. The Searle drug company warned book review editors that they would frighten women if the book was widely reviewed. Investigators quizzed Mrs. Seaman's friends about her private life, and doctors quoted in the book received threatening phone calls; one eventually lost his job.

Mrs. Seaman also said she was annoyed at the way "American men have turned against the condom," which she said has led to a rise in venereal disease.

STUDIES

Elaine Archer, of the New York Women's Health Collective, said that by the end of the third year of the original studies of Enovid, which began in 1957, all 857 women who started with the project had dropped out. The final report covered only 132 women who had taken the pill for one to three years. During that time, five of the women died. No autopsies were performed.

In 1966, Miss Archer said, the FDA Advisory Committee on Obstetrics and Gynecology checked the pill's relation to breast cancer. One case involving a woman taking oral contraceptives had been reported during 1965. Researchers at the National Cancer Institute felt there should have been 1200 cases, but the FDA found only one. Drug companies admitted they had gathered no data on side effects. Several of these companies had been actively discouraging doctors from reporting side effects.

In September, 1968, the American Medical Association Journal reported that there had been no increase in the incidence of blood clots among pill users. This came six months after British studies had pointed to a definite relationship. The author of the AMA article was a man associated with Searle, the company that manufactures Enovid.

The AMA Journal had refused to print another study showing that cancer of the cervix was more prevalent in women who use the pill than in women who depend solely on the diaphragm. The Journal editors had tried to make the authors revise their study. A British medical journal eventually printed it.

DRUG COMPANIES

Miss Archer contended that the pill is the greatest source of increased profits for most drug companies, and has financed four foreign subsidiaries for Searle.

In 1968, more than a fourth of drug company sales were in foreign countries where the Agency for International Development is pushing the use of oral contraceptives.