

The Pregnancy Control Center:

Just how safe are those abortions?

ABORTIONS
are legal in New York.
Pregnancy Control
Center arranges all
details for you.
Maximum waiting: 2
days; open every day.
For appointment call:
(212) 873-1496

By JUDY SKINNER

"ABORTIONS are legal in New York," says the ad that has appeared in EXCALIBUR for the past several weeks. The competition for the very profitable business of providing abortions for Canadian women seems to be mounting.

Pregnancy Control Center in New York City, the group that has been placing the ads in the EXCALIBUR, has also been making long distance phone calls to CYSF vice-president Karen Hood asking for the York University abortion business.

What about the Pregnancy Control Center abortion service? Are they medically reliable? How do they measure up financially to other sources of abortions? Is New York City a good place to send a woman for an abortion?

Since Pregnancy Control is a new service very little is known about them medically. However, in their "price list" that was given to both the York Student Clinic and the Toronto Women's Liberation Abortion Collective they listed a "mechanical packing" abortion procedure, a procedure that is generally considered to be a butcher abortionist technique. When questioned about this, the representative of the center knew nothing about the use of the technique and could not explain why it was listed by what purports to be a medically reliable abortion group.

The representative was also questioned as to whether the center has the facilities for vacuum aspirator abortions, a procedure widely used in Europe for abortions under 12 weeks which is, in many cases, easier and preferable to the standard dialation and curettage operation ("D & C"). (Since the vacuum technique is quicker and involves less blood loss and less risk of uterine perforation and requires less anesthetic, it is rapidly replacing the "D & C" as the standard method of abortion under 12 weeks into pregnancy.)

The representative of the Pregnancy Control Center had never heard of the vacuum technique!

What about cost? The cheapest way for a woman to secure an abortion is through a hospital in Toronto. However, in many cases this is impossible due to time factors related to the quota systems that Toronto hospitals have, in practice, adopted, and because women under 21 years of age usually have medical and hospital insurance only through their parents and thus their parents would be aware of their daughter's abortion. For these reasons, a large number of women go to New York State.

The York Student Clinic as well as the Toronto Women's Liberation Abortion Collective have been sending

women to two doctors in Buffalo whose medical practices consist of abortions exclusively. The medical reliability of these doctors is proven — of course there is always some risk involved in abortion — but the overwhelming evidence is that these doctors do good "D & C" operations in their office clinics.

For most cases the cost here is \$300 (U.S.) although it is often possible to find a way for a woman with less money to obtain an abortion. The cost for an out patient "D & C" through Pregnancy Control was listed by the representative as \$285 (U.S.). However, there are a number of ancillary expenses that must be taken into account — the cost of transportation to Buffalo or New York City, the fact that it is better for a woman to be accompanied by a friend, the cost of accommodation for an overnight stay (virtually mandatory in New York City; in Buffalo women who are travelling by public transport will probably want to rest for a few hours before travelling).

When considering these factors it becomes much more expensive to go to New York City, without even beginning to consider factors of convenience (a woman who can get a friend with a car to drive her to Buffalo can go there, have her abortion and be back in the same day) and possible hassles in dealing with what may very well be an alien social environment in New York City.

Another detail about cost: Pregnancy Control has asserted that they can make it possible for women to get their OHSIP coverage for a New York abortion. However, according to the OMA schedule of fees (on the basis of 90% payment) this amounts to \$67.50 for an operation in the first 10 weeks of pregnancy. (About enough to cover air fare for one person or for two on youth stand-by.)

OHSC (Ontario Hospital Services Commission) will pay 75% of in-patient hospital service costs for New York State abortions.

However, both OHSIP and OHSC are quick to point out that payment of claims will only be approved if the claims department is satisfied that the conditions under which the abortion was performed fulfilled the requirements of Canadian law.

Thus, a woman obtaining such an abortion could not be certain that any of her claims on the provincial medical plans would be paid, assuming that she had the time and energy to try and prove her case to the agencies involved.

What does the Pregnancy Control Center consist of? This was very unclear when the representative visited the York Student Clinic. He simply said

that abortions were arranged through several doctors who practiced at a private hospital in New York City.

From further questioning, it seems that the Pregnancy Control Center is simply a referral office whose function is to channel women needing abortions to a number of doctors connected with several hospitals, for a suitable commission per abortion, of course.

Although the introductory letter of Pregnancy Control intimated that counseling and social work services would be available, it seems that little other than directions from the airport to the hospital and a briefing as to what to expect upon arrival at the hospital is, in fact, available.

There seems to be some evidence that not even basic directions were given one particular patient, a York student. In one of their phone inquiries, the Pregnancy Control people mentioned some difficulty about a woman who lacked the proper permission letter for hospital admission (being under 21) and had some difficulty meeting the legal requirements for hospital admission.

The York Student Clinic is unaware of the identity of this woman (they have

not referred anyone to Pregnancy Control) and would appreciate knowing more about her experience in New York City so that they can better counsel other women.

It seems that the Pregnancy Control Center is basically an abortion mill rip-off for some doctors and intermediaries in New York City. Of course, all the organizations involved in providing abortions in New York State for Canadian women are mainly interested in the large amount of money to be made. (A doctor can do around three "D & C" operations per hour at \$300 each — expenses are probably around \$100 for each abortion.)

The York Student Clinic has been temporarily closed for about two weeks. It will be re-opening soon under new direction, with staff control and with two new full-time staff. Until then, people who need assistance with abortion or birth control matters should contact Frumie at 635-1342, Bev at 638-3547, or Judy at 532-4030 or ext. 3505.

Judy Skinner is an organizer for the Student Christian Movement at the York campus.

