

birth control still to be accepted

(Based on a conversation with Dr. M. J. Ball, Director, Student Health Service, University of Alberta, Edmonton)

Birth control, morning after pill, and abortion are the three major methods available to the Alberta woman who wants to prevent unwanted birth, with each method becoming desirable only when the one before it has failed.

Even though the laws were revised as far back as 1969 to take "prevention of conception" off the Criminal Code, the rising demand for abortion services, as well as the large numbers of unwanted children make it clear that a large part of the Canadian public has still not accepted the use of contraception and family planning. In Alberta alone, 80 per cent of all children are unplanned, and about 12 per cent of all births are illegitimate.

One of the major reasons for the relative failure of family planning appears to be the limited access which most families have to birth control information and facilities. Most medical health unit doctors, for instance, do not yet appear to have accepted the need for clinics. And, as yet, only 23 out of the over 900 hospitals in Canada operate family planning clinics. In all, there are only about 65 centres in Canada, far short of the projected 700 that are needed to provide adequate service to a country of Canada's size.

Until family planning services become upgraded, there will be a rapidly-increasing demand for abortion. Taking into account the fact that the post-war bulge in Canada's population is just now entering the reproductive age (15-49) - the demand could soon become ten times the 1970 figure.

There are other reasons why a great number of Canadian women have to resort to the last 'birth control' method,

abortion, or to bearing 'unwanted children'.

Many are unaware that contraceptives now in use are not completely safe; that condoms or diaphragms, for example, have about a 15 per cent failure rate while spermicides and the rhythm method fail about 25 per cent of the time. The most desirable method yet appears to be the daily hormonal pill, in spite of all the 'scare' articles, which have a failure rate of only about two every 1,000 menstrual cycles.

The problem is also, that use of birth control methods involves planning, which does damage to the spontaneity that most people seem to regard as necessary to a desirable sex life. However, even in cases where a 'mistake' is made, there is still an alternative to abortion. The 'morning-after pill' (post-coital estrogens taken in extremely high doses) prevent conception with only about a one per 1,000 failure rate, if taken within 72 hours of exposure. Still in the experimental stage, are prostaglandins, which are successful in preventing continued pregnancy if taken immediately after a missed menstrual period.

Finally there is a growing acceptance in Canada of therapeutic abortions as a final birth control method, and as certainly preferable to illegal abortion or unwanted birth. However, the major obstacle to its use is still the procedure through which a woman requiring abortion has to go. She ends up having to find five doctors, including the majority on a hospital's legal abortion committee, who are sympathetic to her case.

In the Edmonton area, there is only one Family Planning Clinic, and that is operated by the City Health Department in the Avord Arms Building in Edmonton.

by Winston Gereluk

Every woman alive

wants Chanel No5

The 13-year old studied
A slick and stylish mag
Which said: to be truly feminine
Deodorize your vag.

Shave your prickly armpits.
and spray with super-dry
Paint "glowing embers" on your face
Brush mascara on your eyes

Don't demonstrate intelligence
you'll never get a date
Learn to cook and housekeep
And surrender to your fate.

"Mother" she said quietly
"I must be a man."

by Susan Tanner

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