

# Medical And Legal Aspects Of Oral Contraception Discussed

**By Helene Chomiak**  
Oral contraception was discussed last week at Fall Forum in Wauneita Lounge.

Fall Forum is sponsored by the Medical Undergraduate Society to discuss social, moral and religious problems which arise from medical advances.

This year, the medical and legal aspects of oral contraception were presented and representatives of Protestant and Catholic churches explained church dogma.

**THE PILL**

Dr. T. R. Nelson explained the pill is a chemical substance acting like the ovary hormones, estrogen and progesterone. A state of pseudo-pregnancy which results, stops egg development and conception is prevented.

Besides stopping egg development, the pill also helps regulate the menstrual cycle.

Since the ovary is a unique organ which can stop activity for extended periods and then resume its normal function, the pill must be taken regularly.

No long-term research has been done, but Dr. Nelson said, "This is one of the few pills which can be used by so many people with so few side effects."

But the pill must be administered under a doctor's supervision for there are some individual variations. These may be nausea, vomiting, increased salt and water intake and weight gain, deposition of pigment and breast discomfort.

**THE LAW**

Judge Norman Hewitt of the Edmonton Juvenile and Family Court spoke on legal issues. Technically, anyone who sells, advertises or otherwise disposes of contraceptives is committing a crime under Section 150 of the Criminal Code of Canada and may receive a fine of up to \$500

and a sentence up to six months.

The last case tried on this issue was in 1956 in Winnipeg. A company was convicted on the charge of advertising contraceptives and was fined \$25. The only other case was tried some 60 years earlier than that.

**LAW NOT UPHELD**

This law is not upheld very strictly since it is an attempt of the legislature to dictate public morals, said Judge Hewitt, "Amendments are being considered by the department of justice and this section will probably be struck out."

He continued: "The pill will not result in any greater immorality, but some of the publicity surrounding it might."

Judge Hewitt listed several cases in which parents had unwanted children and asked if preventing the birth of these children may be more moral. He said, "If the pill is so

effective, perhaps it is the answer."

Rev. Merdith McLean, associate Anglican chaplain, said his church asks if contraceptives ought ever to be used, and if so, when?

The Anglican church does not distinguish between the types of contraceptives. Mr. McLean says "If it is ever right to prevent conception, perhaps the pill is the best way."

**COUNCIL VIEWPOINT**

The Lambeth Council of Anglican bishops gave this viewpoint on the topic: "It is not the sole purpose of marriage to procreate children but to strengthen the union between man and woman."

"Sometimes it may be necessary to limit the procreative function but would be wrong to limit the union of personality."

The council also stated that they felt, "The repeated withholding by

one partner from the sex act is morally wrong."

But contraception is not a matter of simple convenience. If the couple is simply trying to avoid the responsibilities the only difference is the pill is more effective.

Mr. McLean said, "When some form of contraception must be used, the pill has some advantages. Since it eliminates physical means, it may enhance the act of love."

Each individual case must be dealt with separately, said Mr. McLean.

**RC VIEW**

Father Daley, chaplain at St. Joseph's residence said the Roman Catholic Church takes its stand from statement of Pope Pius XI and Pope Pius XII.

The basic principle is "Anyone using any method to frustrate the generation of life in the acts of matrimony is guilty of great sin."

Any method used solely to prevent conception is called direct sterilization and is not permitted.

Indirect sterilization, when the sex function is altered for any medical purposes is allowed when the good results of this interference are greater than the sin caused by stopping conception.

Father Daley said, "The views of the church are presently changing. A Vatican council is studying the question of contraceptives and there may be a change."

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