

Standard Contraceptives Not Suited In Countries With Huge Population

By LOUIS CASSELS
WASHINGTON (UPI) — The standard contraceptive devices prescribed by U. S. physicians are safe and effective. But they are not well suited to mass use in underdeveloped countries where the "population explosion" is having its greatest impact.

For years, researchers have been trying to develop a cheap, safe, reliable "birth control pill" which could be used in countries where widespread illiteracy, lack of sanitary facilities and native taboos preclude general acceptance of standard contraceptives.

Several promising leads have been found. One is a group of synthetic hormones called the 19-Norsteroids, which have been investigated by Dr. John Rock, professor emeritus of gynecology at Harvard, and Dr. Gregory Pincus, of the Worcester (Mass.) Foundation for Experimental Biology.

Field trials in Puerto Rico and Haiti since 1956 have indicated that these compounds are highly effective in inhibiting ovulation—and hence preventing pregnancy—among women who take one pill a day from the 5th to the 25th days of their menstrual cycles.

The tests so far have covered about 1,000 "woman-years" of experience. Judging by the pre-medication birth rate among the women concerned, there should have been at least 610 pregnancies in the group during this period. Actually, there have been only 18, and 17 of these occurred among women who admitted "skipping" the pills for several days.

Polio Viruses Photographed By Physicians

ALBANY, N.Y. (AP) — Polio viruses have been photographed for the first time inside the human cell where they were manufactured, the American Cancer Society reported today.

The photographs were made by Drs. D. C. Stuart, Jr., and Jorgen Fogh of the New York State Department of Health, supported by Society funds.

Contrary to current belief, the scientists said, polio viruses are not formed in the nucleus or heart of the human cell.

When the virus invades the cell and takes over the cell's mechanisms to manufacture more virus particles, it apparently does the manufacturing in the pool of liquid matter between the nucleus and the cell wall, the scientists said.

One single human cell can produce something like 100,000 virus particles in only a few hours, they said. These particles are so small that they occupy only about one or two per cent of the cell space.

Polio virus, one of the smallest viruses known to infect man, are so tiny that it would take almost a million of them end to end, to make an inch.

The technique by which the polio viruses were photographed is important to the American Cancer Society because of the possibility that some kinds of cancer may be caused by viruses.

The researchers grew the polio virus in laboratory dishes in cells taken from a human placenta. Then it sliced some of the placental matter into extremely thin slices, and photographed these slices under an electron microscope.

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normal ovulation resumes. Some of the patients have reported unpleasant side effects — nausea, headaches, cramps and irregular bleeding. The researchers believe these are primarily psychological in origin, and tend to disappear with continued use of the pills.

A major drawback at present is cost — about 55 cents per pill. This problem might be solved through mass production. Another question is whether some adverse effect may result from long continued use of the pills. There has been no indication so far that such will happen, but only time and careful testing can make sure.

Another chemical compound known as Mer-25 is being investigated by scientists at the Rockefeller Institute in New York. Instead of inhibiting ovulation, this compound acts in the fallopian tubes to prevent a fertilized egg from descending normally to the womb. It has worked extremely well in animal tests. Its theoretical advantage for human use would be that it need not be taken before sexual relations; if

taken within a day or two afterwards, it would cause what might be described as a very early abortion of the fertilized egg.

A third compound, extracted from common garden peas, has been tested by Dr. S. N. Sanyal of Calcutta, India, who claims that it is at least 50 per cent effective as a contraceptive. This pill has to be taken only twice a month. Western scientists who have tested it have not been able to duplicate Dr. Sanyal's results.

But the Indian government is considering mass field trials.

Researchers also have tested a group of drugs called nitrofurans which inhibit sperm production in men. Results to date indicate that they have side effects, including drastic loss of male potency, which would quickly alienate users.

Research is also attempting to make reliable the "rhythm" system of birth control approved by the Catholic church. This system depends on avoiding sex relations during the period immediately before and after ovulation. The only time when conception can take place.

Although this "pregnable period" is relatively brief — about 72 hours — it is notoriously hard to pinpoint, and tends to shift unpredictably as a result of illness, emotion or exercise.

Two lines of research are being pursued. One seeks a drug or compound which would "stabilize" the time of ovulation. The other seeks a simple and reliable test which will tell when a woman is preparing to ovulate.

Some progress is reported on both problems, but neither has been fully solved so far.

Very little money is being spent

on birth control research. A few private foundations are supporting a few scattered projects. The governments of the United States and other major Western nations have shied away from the whole subject, fearing involvement in religious controversy.

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