

THE MORNING AFTER PILL: SOUND SCIENCE?

In a December 12, 2011 editorial, "Politics and Plan B," the Akron *Beacon Journal* noted that Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius reversed a decision of the FDA that allowed the "emergency contraceptive" to be sold over the counter with no age restrictions. Her decision was certainly out of character for the staunchly pro-abortion and pro-emergency contraceptive Obama administration. It may have seen an opportunity to appear more moderate on the issue, knowing that it was currently under consideration by U.S. District Judge Edward R. Korman. Korman had previously ordered the FDA to permit the sale of Plan B to 17-year-olds, and to consider reversing its decision to require younger minors to have a doctor's prescription. The *Beacon* stated, "It is a shame the Obama White House has chosen now to disregard sound science in forming public policy."

The *Beacon's* own science is lacking, however. The proper application of science involves taking all facts into consideration when forming policy. The *Beacon* listed only one mechanism of Plan B, saying, "The pill delays or prevents ovulation." According to the American Society for Reproductive Medicine, this "contraceptive" can also 2) make it more difficult for the sperm to reach the egg, and 3) cause the lining of the womb to thin, thus preventing implantation. This third mechanism causes an early abortion, since what is by then a hundred-cell embryo fails to implant in the womb and dies.

The editorial stated Plan B "does not terminate a pregnancy." It could do so only because family planning/population control advocates have redefined pregnancy as beginning at implantation. But science tells us the life of an individual human being begins at fertilization.

The *Beacon* also stated that the White House "undercut its own ... policies that prevent unwanted pregnancies and abortions." But causing an early abortion does not prevent abortion. Furthermore, an analysis of 23 scientific studies from 10 countries on the use of emergency contraceptives concluded, "no study found an effect on pregnancy or abortion rates." Moreover, a study in England compared areas where the morning-after pill was available to teens free of charge to areas where it was not available. The pregnancy rate for girls under 16 remained the same in both areas, while the rate of sexually transmitted diseases increased by 12% where the pill was free.

Plan B advocates apparently think girls as young as 12 can be expected to be their own gynecologists, and to administer the powerful hormone in Plan B to themselves without the benefit of a prior physical exam. There is some evidence that Plan B may increase the risk of ectopic pregnancy, which can result in maternal death. Can we expect a child under 17 who is trying to hide her pregnancy from her parents to recognize the symptoms of ectopic pregnancy and seek timely medical help?

Finally, the U.S. government's scientifically gathered data tell us that in 1940 (before modern contraceptives and school sex education, but when the accepted norm was "wait until marriage,") just 3.8% of births were out-of-wedlock. In 2008 (with modern contraceptives and school sex education), when the norm is "do what feels good, but be protected,") 40.6% of births occurred out of wedlock.

Given these scientific findings, a policy that says we ought to make hormonal contraceptives freely available to young girls brings to mind the statement, "Man's wisdom is God's foolishness."

For more information on Hormonal and Emergency Contraceptives, click on *The Issues*.

References for “The Morning After Pill and Sound Science.”

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