Letter to the editor Plan B morning after pill

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The decision to make available over the counter Plan B morning after pills to girls of any age by Federal Judge Edward Korman is not only imprudent but dangerous for young girls. There have been few long term studies on the effects of these potent hormonal drugs on the developing bodies of young girls. The real ignorance of these long term effects of these potentially dangerous drugs by the American Congress of Obstetricians and the American Academy of Pediatrics which have endorsed making this drug available to girls as young as ten to eleven years is no less astounding. This decision is a reflection of the hyper-sexuality of our culture where it is not politically correct to warn against these powerful drugs because we do not know their long term effects. The rationale given is that the long term effects of these drugs must be weighed against the terrible plague of teen pregnancy and late term abortion or children born out of wedlock. It is stated that this has been resolved in favor of this morning after pill and chances that the long-term deleterious effects from this medication will not come about. We are in a guessing game with the lives of young girls.

Years ago there was a similar situation with thalidomide which was approved by all these medical organizations when few long term studies had been done on this

drug. The results were devastating for thousands of newborns. If studies in the future show deleterious long term effects of Plan B on the young girls who used them as they mature into adulthood, whom can we blame? These agencies are immune from legal action. The medical organizations that approved the drug are unlikely targets of lawsuits. The FDA and Judge Korman can not be sued. When it comes to the maturing bodies of young girls, much more prudence is called for than the wholesale permission of Plan B use without a doctor's supervision. In this sense the federal decision is both premature and dangerous. It seems reasonable to wait for those studies or at least require the supervision of a doctor before the use of this powerful drug that might have disastrous long term results down the line. All these dangers have been overridden by the judge for reasons given *supra*.

Secondly, these drugs may be abortifacient. While there may be doubt by some about when life begins in the womb, we should err in favor of life. The logical course is that when it is a matter of life, all doubt must be resolved in favor of that life. In other words, while some may have doubts about when life begins in the womb, that doubt must be resolved in favor of life.¹ That being the case, then the fact that this drug is abortifacient

makes it possible that its use will terminate an actual human life and not just act as an impediment to the union of the sperm and the human egg. If that is the case, all those who are pro life and anti abortion have a real problem with the use of the Plan B pill. In other words, the use of that pill is blatantly immoral because of the abortifacient effect, even if this is just a possible effect. The legal presumption must be in favor of life.

Thirdly, having these drugs available over the counter to any girl at any age will likely increase promiscuity with the thought that "if I have sex and do not want to get pregnant, I can take this pill and that will make me certain not to get pregnant." That will make it much easier to engage in promiscuous sex without fear of pregnancy. In addition, the use of these pills will discourage visits to the doctor and therefore there will be no examination for sexually transmitted diseases, which otherwise could be caught in their early stages. These venereal diseases may only be detected much later when great damage has already been done and the diseases may have already been more widely disseminated. The fact is that one in four teens suffer from some form of venereal disease. Thus, the over-the-counter availability of the Plan B pill will serve to prevent early detection of venereal diseases, with serious health consequences for the girls and a worsening of what is already an epidemic. Some venereal diseases have life long effects unless caught early.

Fourth, what happens to parental control of the sexual lives of their very young children? Not having to visit doctors and even then, given the privacy stipulation of doctors not to reveal any of this to the parents, this will further lessen

parental control of the sexual lives of their young children. The use of this morning after pill will only encourage young girls to hide their sexual lives from their parents. Even when doctors are involved, parental involvement is almost nil.

All of these dangers about the use and abuse of Plan B contraception drugs to prevent pregnancy now sold over the counter to any girl no matter how young, calls for more stringent controls of the distribution of these powerful drugs under a doctor's supervision. The long/short term consequences for very young girls, parental rights to control the sex lives of their children, the danger for non treatment of possible venereal diseases and the long/short term results of this over the counter drug, makes the decision of Judge Korman "arbitrary, capricious and unreasonable" not the decision of the Secretary of Health which seems reasonable by requiring a doctor's supervision for girls sixteen and under. In making this abortifacient available without prescription to very young girls and therefore with little or no supervision by medical personnel, we are engaged in a grand experiment with young girls as guinea pigs since we know so very little about the long term effects of this powerful drug on young girls.

ENDNOTE

1. A common analogy used is that if a hunter sees something stirring in the bushes and thinks it might be a deer, but it might be a child, he is required to assume it is a child and not shoot until all doubt is resolved. Similarly, for a human embryo or fetus, if there is doubt whether, at an early gestational age, it is alive, if one is not sure, they should not take steps to terminate that life, but must preserve it.