

[Health](#)
[Photos](#)
[2018 Olympics](#)
[News](#)
[Entertainment](#)
[Sports](#)
[Features](#)
[Archives](#)
[Archive](#)
[The Almanac](#)
[Search](#)

[HOME / UPI ARCHIVES](#)

Woman's World: Report on non-surgical abortion

By PATRICIA McCORMACK, UPI Health Editor | Nov. 20, 1981

[Follow @upi](#)

0 Comments

Some day a woman may be able to obtain at a drug store vaginal suppositories that excite the uterus in early pregnancy, making it convulse somewhat -- resulting in expulsion of contents.

That's non-surgical abortion.

Such suppositories -- inserted one hour apart -- during a research project caused uterine contractions and non-surgical termination of early pregnancy in 49 of 50 patients, doctors from New York University said in Washington, D.C.

Another experimental study, referred to by the NYU doctors, tried to see how well women could administer the suppositories at home to terminate

early pregnancy in the privacy of their bathrooms. The success rate was 98 percent.

The New York University team reported on their investigations with the not-yet-available for general use suppositories at the annual scientific meeting of the Association of Planned Parenthood Physicians.

The theme of the meeting was: 'Reproductive Freedom -- Worldwide Right.'

Attendees at the conference devoted to what's new in planned parenthood medicine also heard about other experimental techniques and took in talk ranging from marijuana and false-positive pregnancy tests to the proposed constitutional amendment to prohibit abortion.

The non-surgical abortion suppositories containing a prostaglandin-derivative came from Upjohn Company in Kalamazoo, Mich., said the report from Drs. Livia S. Wan and Andrew Stiber and Juana Turkel, N.Y.U. Medical School's Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology.

Here are some words from their report:

'A new approach to terminate very early pregnancy was tried on 49 healthy women who were proven to be pregnant from 31 to 47 days from their last menstrual period.

'Of the total 49 patients who participated in this study all but one had a successful termination of pregnancy; one required surgical termination.'

The modus operandi, as described in the report:

-Suppositories containing the ingredient that made the uterus contract or convulse was given in two doses, one hour apart.

-Patients were kept under observation for eight hours then sent home.

-They were checked 14 days later to confirm that the pregnancy was successfully terminated.

There were side effects. The doctors reported:

'Most side effects such as nausea, vomiting, diarrhea and cramps, although clinically manageable, were still bothersome.'

Their report was limited to experiences of the 49 subjects who completed their follow-up to the onset of their first post-therapy menstrual period.

All subjects had vaginal bleeding. Patients with severe abdominal cramps were given Demerol.

Women in the clinical research study participated on a voluntary basis and had signed informed consent forms. They ranged in age in age from 18 to 39; 35 or 71.5 percent of the total study population was between 21 and 30 years old.

Why was the study done?

More words from the doctors:

'Over one million legal abortions are performed in the United States each year. Of these 50 percent are performed at less than 8 weeks gestation.

'Presently, 99 percent of these abortions are performed by suction curettage techniques.

'These techniques have proven to be safe and acceptable to most patients. However, the search for non-surgical, safe, and acceptable alternatives for termination of early gestation has been a continuous effort for many investigations.

'Prostaglandins and its newer derivatives provide the most promising hope for the achievement of this purpose.

'The rate of success in our study was very encouraging. Only one patient required suction curettage.'

The doctors said the possibility of developing a safe, non-surgical, effective and acceptable method of termination of very early pregnancy is very real.

'It may become an attractive alternative to surgery for some patients,' they said.

Another experiment -- this one involving baboons -- covered reversible sterilization in the female. 'A Method for Reversible Sterilization in the Female' was the title of the report from Dr. C. Irving Meeker and Dr. Wilfred Roth.

Meeker is chairman of the department of obstetrics and gynecology at Maine Medical Center and professor of obstetrics and gynecology at the University of Vermont. Roth is professor of engineering there.

In the experiments, plugs were put in the fallopian tubes of baboons. The plugs are supposed to keep the baboons from becoming pregnant. When the

plugs are removed, the idea is that the baboons can become pregnant.

Reversible sterilization.

As to this being a viable technology for use with human females, the doctors said:

'There is no ethical way of testing the reversibility of a sterilization human females.

'The possibility that this, or any other technique of (reversible) sterilization, may be offered to women who wish to maintain their long term fertility is remote at best.'

Why search for such a technology, anyway?

'More than 20 years after the introduction of oral contraceptives and the reintroduction of IUDs, an ideal contraceptive does not exist,' the doctors said.

'Because of this, sterilization is steadily increasing in popularity and is already the leading method of fertility control among many segments of our population.

'Sterilization is being utilized by couples in their early 20s, with small families... as well as single individuals.

'Because of this there is also an increasing demand for reversal.'

The doctors said newer microsurgical techniques for reversal are promising but because they call for great skill and sophisticated equipment, the potential for such operations in developing countries is limited.

The question of marijuana smoking causing false-positive urine pregnancy tests was tackled by doctors from the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology and the Department of Toxicology at Indiana University School of Medicine.

Dr. James Noland Jr. and associates reported on investigations during which they gave six men and eight surgically sterilized women one marijuana cigarette each.

Urine specimens were collected prior to smoking and 1, 5, and 24 hours later. Each urine was tested for the presence of cannabinoids, and a pregnancy test was also performed.

To investigate effects of marijuana under chronic conditions, three women who smoked marijuana at least once per day over a 3-month period submitted to urine specimens.

'All urines ... showed the presence of cannabinoids,' the doctors reported. 'All urine pregnancy tests were negative.'

'The study suggests that smoking marijuana does not result in a false positive urine pregnancy test.'

Proposals for a constitutional amendment that would prohibit abortion was brought up by Dr. Douglas H. Huber, of Baltimore, Md.

'The proposed Constitutional amendments against abortion would prohibit abortion at all stages of pregnancy,' he said.

Over 45 bills proposing Constitutional amendments to prohibit abortion have been introduced in Congress since 1973, including 17 in the first three

months of 1981.

'In addition to reversing the 1973 Supreme Court ruling which made the abortion choice a private decision, the implications (of such an amendment) for reproductive health and medical practice would be far-reaching.

'Methods of family planning which may have several actions, including effects prior to and around the time of implantation, could be banned or regulated.

'These include the intra-uterine device, oral contraceptives, and natural family planning methods.

'Physicians and women would be at legal peril in continuing to use IUDs, particularly with new pregnancy tests which may be able to detect transient implantation during the use of an IUD.

'With advancing medical knowledge, it has become increasingly difficult to make sharp distinctions between contraception and abortion.'

'The constricting effect on medical practice could be substantial.'

If such an amendment were authorized, Huber said psychological and social problems of criminal punishment for women obtaining illegal abortions would need to be weighed.

'The number of women who might be prosecuted could be very large,' Huber said. 'Specific penalties have not yet been considered by Congress.'

'However, some advocates of the amendments have called for severe punishment, similar to that for premeditated murder.'