

MEDICINE

Birth Control Using Pills

Conception can be prevented by taking several pills of phosphorylated hesperidin each day, experiences of 298 out of 300 couples show.

► SUCCESSFUL BIRTH control by pills has been achieved by 298 out of 300 couples, Dr. Benjamin F. Sieve of Boston reports in *Science* (Oct. 10).

The two failures "are of no scientific significance," Dr. Sieve states, because the couples failed to cooperate in taking the pills.

The pills are made of the chemical, phosphorylated hesperidin. Rat experiments showing that this chemical might become a successful birth control pill were previously made by Dr. Sieve and by other scientists. (See SNL, April 19, p. 252.)

The chemical in the pills acts to reinforce the outer covering of the egg cell so that sperm cells from the male cannot pierce this barrier to fertilize the egg.

These pills can be taken indefinitely without causing any harmful effects, Dr. Sieve states. And they do not cause permanent infertility. When a couple that has been practicing birth control by this means wants to have a child, they simply stop taking the pills.

The pills are not considered the answer to the problem of birth control in its broadest aspects. The method, simple as it may seem to many American couples, is too complicated for primitive, ignorant people throughout the world.

The pills must be taken every day, and not just once a day, either. Dr. Sieve's method required the husband to take the pills three times a day and the wife four times a day. The reason is that the amount of the chemical in the blood must be kept continuously at a certain level for it to be effective. Also both man and woman must take the pills for 10 days consecutively before anti-fertility, or birth control, action can be assured.

Most Willing to Take Pills

The two failures in Dr. Sieve's 300 couples occurred because one couple did not take the pills during a 40-day vacation trip and the other couple did not take the pills during a week-long drinking spree. Most of his patients, however, even those who all their lives had disliked taking pills, seemed willing to take these and did not mind having to take them three or four times a day.

The ages of the women ranged from 17 to 43 years. All the couples had had at least one normal child before starting the pills. All were volunteers who were not afraid of failure with the pills, as they were mentally and financially prepared to have another child. All pledged not to use any

other method of birth control during the trial of the pills.

Couples used the method from three to 30 months, stopping when they wanted to have another child. Out of the group, 123 stopped the pills, had a wanted baby, and then started taking the pills again. Another 97 couples, after a period of birth control, are now expecting wanted babies.

None of those wanting babies had any difficulty in impregnation. The longest period required for conception was 9 to 13 weeks. There were three miscarriages, five premature births and five caesarean births. All the others were normal, and the babies were healthy and normal.

Report Is Preliminary

The total woman-years of protection for the 300 couples was 317.1, far above the American Medical Association standard of 200 woman-years for any group studied for 12 months.

Dr. Sieve considers his report a preliminary one and says much more data from patients must be accumulated before general use of this birth control chemical is warranted.

Couples wanting to try the method will

have to do so under a doctor's direction. The chemical cannot be obtained at drug-store counters.

Phosphorylated hesperidin, surprisingly, may also have fertility-stimulating activity. This is suggested by the experience of two of the 300 couples. These two had been chosen because each couple had had one normal child followed by a long period of apparent inability to have children. Both husbands and wives had been declared normally fertile by competent specialists. These two couples, after taking the birth control pills for a time, stopped them and the wives became pregnant within a month. In only eight other couples did pregnancy come so soon after stopping the pills.

More study will be needed to explain this, Dr. Sieve points out.

Science News Letter, October 18, 1952

WILDLIFE

Hunters Get Score Cards for Game

► HUNTERS THIS fall will get a chance, for the first time, to be part of a nationwide survey of duck, geese and coot, the Fish and Wildlife Service has announced.

Approximately 150 post offices now have a card form to be given to federal duck stamp purchasers, half of which is a score card for listing the numbers and kinds of waterfowl they bag. Data that each hunter furnishes about his personal waterfowl harvest will be used to analyze the relationship between hunter kills and bird season regulations. The system has successfully been used previously on a state-wide basis.

Science News Letter, October 18, 1952



BUFFALO HUNT—One of the dioramas in Chicago Natural History Museum's new hall of American Indians that opened on Oct. 11 is this one showing a Plains Indians' buffalo hunt. Groups of about 30 hunters, using arrows and lances, could kill as many as 300 buffaloes in 15 minutes.