



Supporting a pastoral commitment to a culture of life in the Archdiocese of Omaha

INAUGURAL EDITION • SPRING 2006 • VOLUME 1, NUMBER 1

Engaged Couples and the Birth Control Pill?

Q. Dr. Hilgers, three of my fifteen engaged couples have told me that their doctor has put them on the birth control pill for medical reasons. What is your medical opinion? -Omaha Archdiocesan Priest

A. Father, this is a great question to a very common situation in which almost all women of reproductive age find themselves. In 1960, the birth control pill (BCP) was first introduced for family planning purposes only. However, a dramatic shift in its use has occurred. Although still prescribed for avoiding pregnancy, the BCP is a monolithic "treatment" for almost all gynecological problems. While women are led to believe the BCP will "treat" their irregular cycles, PMS, bleeding, acne, etc. in actuality only the symptoms are treated. The underlying causes have not been identified nor properly treated. In addition, the BCP is potentially abortifacient. When the patient discontinues the BCP, the symptoms return and often with greater intensity.

When a woman is put on the pill for medical reasons, it goes without saying that it can also be used for contraception. This is particularly troubling for unmarried young women who think they have been given permission to have "safe sex." This would also be true for engaged couples.

NaProTechnology (Natural Procreative Technology), developed from our 30 years of research in the menstrual and fertility cycles, eliminates the need for physicians to prescribe the BCP for medical or family planning purposes. What you need to know as a priest is that NaProTechnology is a new women's health science that is completely consistent with the Church's teachings.

Medical Sterilization?

Priests frequently ask me whether it is morally acceptable to sterilize a woman who has had several children, is currently pregnant, and is told by her doctor that the lining of her uterus is so thin that, should she get pregnant again, she could/would suffer a life-threatening hemorrhage and lose the baby as well. The woman's OB is recommending that the current baby be delivered through a c-section and "while he has access to the pelvic area that her fallopian tubes (tubal ligation) be tied rendering the problem of future pregnancy a moot question." The woman contacts her parish priest and asks whether sterilization in this situation is "allowed by the Catholic Church."

First, I stress that the physician's advice needs to be heeded. In other words, this woman should not risk her life and that of a future conception with another pregnancy. In her circumstances, the goal of avoiding a pregnancy in the future is a good end.

Second, I explain why accomplishing this good end through a tubal ligation (TL) is immoral. Only if a TL were a cure for a disease of the fallopian tube would sterilization be a secondary effect, that is, a condition that is only tolerated but not directly willed. But there is no disease of the fallopian tube for which sterilization is a cure. Consequently, a TL can only be described as directly sterilizing.

In addition to discussing the negative moral aspects of TL, I also explain the possible adverse medical events: serious bleeding, abdominal pain, ectopic pregnancy. Lastly, I point out that no form of contraception, including TL, is 100% effective in preventing a pregnancy. There is a small possibility that

From a medical perspective, NaProTechnology provides the identification of the underlying problems and effective cooperative treatments.

To obtain NaProTechnology treatments, a woman must chart her cycles using the standardization of the Creighton Model FertilityCare System. With this standardized charting, a physician can evaluate and treat her cycles. This system is very effective to achieve and avoid pregnancy and can be used confidently by couples for their entire reproductive lives.

Our ongoing experience shows that women are grateful with real solutions to their real problems. They are very relieved when they don't have to compromise their faith or personal values. And, you need to know how important it is to them when they have the guidance and support of their priest

We have developed professional delivery services that can assist your engaged couples. Please do not hesitate to refer them to our web site or for a second opinion. As medical providers, we don't operate in a vacuum. Knowing that we have the understanding and support of the priests makes a real difference not only in the lives of our patients but in our service delivery. -Thomas W. Hilgers, MD



Thomas W. Hilgers, MD

Obstetrician-gynecologist and director of the Pope Paul VI Institute for the Study of Human Reproduction and the National Center for Women's Health. Co-developer of the **CREIGHTON MODEL FertilityCare™ System**. Member of the Pontifical Academy for Life. Editor of Connect Newsletter.

following a TL, a woman can get pregnant and then risks a life-threatening tubal pregnancy.

Third, I suggest that the priest help the woman pursue a good means toward her good end of avoiding a future pregnancy. She should consult our directory of Creighton Model Fertilitycare practitioners (www.fcca.com) so that she (and her husband), by learning to chart their reproductive cycles, can avoid a pregnancy in a moral way: a) by identifying the fertile/infertile phases of every monthly ovulatory cycle and b) by avoiding genital contact whenever they are in the fertile phase of their cycle.

Fourth, I recommend that the woman call me directly if she would like to discuss her situation in detail. I stress that my solution to the problem of what to do in the event of a weakened uterus is a win/win answer. It is woman-friendly (the gift of the woman's reproductive capacity is left intact), couple-friendly (their acts of intercourse can still be open to life and therefore open to their reciprocal exchange of love) and morality-friendly (with the decision to use natural means to solve this dilemma the woman continues to be in union with God and does not sin). -Sr. Renée Mirkes



Sr. Renée Mirkes, OSF, PhD

Director of the Center for NaProEthics at the Pope Paul VI Institute for the Study of Human Reproduction, Omaha, Nebraska.

This is the Inaugural Issue

This is the inaugural issue of the Institute's newsletter written specifically for the priests in the Archdiocese of Omaha. The purpose of this newsletter is to support your pastoral commitment to the Culture of Life, primarily in the area of women's health care. We look forward to responding to your questions in this periodic newsletter and assisting you with the services available at the Institute. What questions come up in your pastoral ministry? If you have any, please write or call us at any of the numbers listed on the backside of this newsletter. -From the Director, Thomas W. Hilgers, MD



Pope Paul VI Institute
For the Study of Human Reproduction



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to a culture of life in the Archdiocese of Omaha

Sexuality Sanctity Science

Connect

Marriage Quality Medicine



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Inaugural Priest Resource Newsletter

Helping Priests Respond To
Medical and Moral Challenges

The Home of **FertilityCare™** and **NaProTECHNOLOGY™**

Building a Culture of Life in Women's Health Care

Holy Mary, Mother of God,
you have given the world its true light,
Jesus, your Son—the Son of God,
you abandoned yourself completely
to God's call
and thus became a wellspring
of the goodness which flows forth from him.
Show us Jesus. Lead us to him.
Teach us to know and love him,
so that we too can become
capable of true love
and be fountains of living water
in the midst of a thirsting world.
~Closing Prayer of the Encyclical Letter "Deus Caritas Est",
Benedict XVI, December 25, 2005.

Pope Paul VI Institute Directory

- **FertilityCare™ Center of Omaha**
To learn the Creighton Model FertilityCare System
(402) 392-0842 or fcoco@poppepaulvi.com
Co-directors: Jeanice Winduska, Kathy Chervosky
- **National Center for Women's Health**
For clinic questions:
(402) 390-6600
Linda Cady (Dr. Hilger's head nurse).
Send all medical questions to:
Terri Green (Dr. Hilger's personal administrator)
(402) 390-9167 or rgreen@poppepaulvi.com.
- **Creighton Model FertilityCare Allied Health Education Program**
For fertilitycare provider education
(402) 390-9168 or education@poppepaulvi.com
Margaret Howard, Alice Sales.
- **Center for NaProEthics**
For ethics questions and consults:
(402) 390-0812 or ethics@poppepaulvi.com
Sr. Renee Mirkes, OSF, PhD

More resources can be found on our websites:
www.poppepaulvi.com
www.creightonmodel.com
www.naprotechnology.com

Chapel of the Holy Family
Open business days, 8:00 a.m.–4:30 p.m.
Mass Schedule
8:30 a.m. Mondays and Fridays
Adoration
8:15 a.m. to 9:15 a.m. Thursdays

- **Rev. Edward Richard M.S., D. TH. M., J.D.**
For ethics and questions
(314) 792-6500 or richard@kenrick.edu
- **Direct all other questions to:**
Sue Hilgers: (402) 390-6600 ext. 49 or suehilg@aol.com.

This newsletter can be accessed online at
www.poppepaulvi.com/connect.htm