



## Life Issues Forum

### Plan B: Winners and Losers By Susan E. Wills

*September 8, 2006*

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) recently approved over-the-counter (OTC) sale of the “emergency contraceptive” Plan B for men and women 18 and older. To ensure medical supervision over minors’ use, those under 18 will still need a prescription for Plan B. *Or will they?* There will be nothing to prevent an older boyfriend, older sibling or friend of an under-age girl from buying Plan B for her.

So who wins from the FDA decision? Barr Pharmaceutical, for one. It projects \$38 million in Plan B sales for 2006, and double that next year.

Planned Parenthood wins. It has a sweetheart pricing arrangement with Barr through 2009, guaranteeing an average profit of over \$20 per packet of Plan B. This “nonprofit” earned \$15 million on Plan B sales in 2003.

Another winner is acting FDA Commissioner Andrew von Eschenbach, whose nomination was blocked by Senators Hillary Clinton and Patty Murray because of the agency’s delay in approving OTC sales of Plan B. Within hours of approval, both Senators announced support for his nomination.

Other winners are the guys who will pressure a girl to have sex, but don’t want to father a child. In the October 2003 *American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology*, researchers found that “male dominant decision making, ... pressure for sex, ... as well as a strong desire to avoid pregnancy on the part of the male partner ... have a significant association with the use of EC [emergency contraception]. However, relationship factors known to be associated with use of other contraceptive methods, such as communication, satisfaction, and commitment, show no association with EC use.” In short, this is the perfect drug for male predators!

Who loses? Millions of women who will take Plan B, believing the FDA’s claim that it is “contraception” and a safe and effective way to avoid pregnancy. Barr did not explain to women that Plan B can cause the death of a week-old human embryo, although information for doctors does explain “it may inhibit implantation [of the embryo] (by altering the endometrium).”

The safety of repeatedly taking emergency contraception (EC) has not been proved, so it is misleading to claim it is safe. Plan B is equivalent to taking 40 daily Ovrette oral contraceptive pills in a 12-hour period!

The side effects are not trivial: vomiting, stomach pain, tiredness, diarrhea, dizziness, breast pain, headache, and menstrual changes. One doctor who supports Plan B admitted that repeat use “wreaks havoc on a woman’s cycle, so the resulting menstrual chaos acts as a powerful deterrent to using this method too often.” How reassuring. It’s so dangerous that it’s safe!

Plan B prescribing information notes a risk of ectopic pregnancy up to *five times* greater than normal. And researchers in the United States and Europe report escalating rates of sexually-transmitted diseases (STD) with increased access to EC. Large-scale studies also show no reduction in abortion rates from greater access to emergency contraception. Summaries of this research are posted at [www.usccb.org/prolife/issues/abortion/ecfact906.htm](http://www.usccb.org/prolife/issues/abortion/ecfact906.htm).

Who loses? Women and children do.

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