

PHARMACISTS AND EMERGENCY CONTRACEPTION

A cashier at a pharmacy may have to ring up birth control devices including ones that cause an abortion.

Merely selling the devices doesn't necessarily result in abortion.

So some say the culpability or the blame resides with those who manufacture the devices, those who use them, and those who are accomplices in the abortions.

But those who sell the devices are more culpable than the manufacturer - without somebody to sell the devices there would be no manufacturing.

And if the cashier had to ring up guns you would not make excuses for them. If abortion is the horrendous evil that the Church says it is then clearly the cashier ringing up abortion kits etc is culpable.

Many pharmacists particularly from an Islamic and Roman Catholic background wish to have the right not to fill prescriptions for emergency contraception. They think such contraception causes an early abortion for their religion says so. Their religion by implication incites hatred against those who avail of such contraception by tacitly calling them murderers. And religion has no problem with calling them murderers outright.

This form of contraception works best when taken between one and three days following unprotected sex or after when contraceptives or condoms failed. Women who were raped may look for emergency contraception.

Emergency contraception prevents the fertilised egg from implanting in the womb. It does not kill the egg directly. The womb lining is changed by the contraceptives so that the egg will be unable to implant and grow into a baby. The same thing happens if a woman conceives during breastfeeding. The egg won't implant. The pharmacists and their religions are not campaigning against women having sex during lactation.

The pharmacists are meant to dispense medication. That is their job. The reasons a woman may ask them to fill a prescription for emergency contraception are between her and her doctor and it is not the pharmacists' concern. The pharmacist who refuses to give emergency contraception is not respecting the woman's decision and forcing her or his religious beliefs on the woman. Also, the woman might not use the contraception. If she takes it, it is her who will lose the egg not the pharmacist.

If a pharmacist has religious objections to giving out emergency contraception, the pharmacist should look for another job. As long as he or she wants to be a pharmacist he or she must dispense the contraception. Where will it end if we give her him the "right" to refuse? Why stop with religion? Why not permit a pharmacist who believes that vitamin c causes cancer to refuse to dispense it? Do we need to start giving Catholic taxi-drivers the right to refuse to drive a woman to an abortion clinic or a Mormon Church?

Some say that pharmacists should be allowed to refuse contraception and that it is up to the authorities to make sure there are other pharmacists around who will provide it. They say the pharmacists are entitled to their moral and religious and cultural beliefs. But what if the pharmacists ARE the authorities? In reality, they need to do their duties as pharmacists and not as religious people. There should be no exemptions. Also, it is a mistake to worry too much about belief for not everybody who claims to believe really does. Thinking you believe and believing are different things.

There is a principle at stake. A pharmacist should be prepared to help a girl who after rape or a drunken mistake may be pregnant or at risk of getting pregnant. If he or she will not do it and we say that is fine as long as there are other pharmacists around who will help you are saying that in theory the pharmacist should not help if they are unavailable. If the principle is dispensed with the right of a girl to get help from any pharmacist is dispensed with. It is also saying that if enough people frown on contraception or taking a pill for an early abortion is wrong then it must be banned.

Roman Catholic hospitals are required by Church authorities to comply fully with Church teaching. They are not permitted to give abortion referrals for example. The fact that the woman may believe abortion is her right and when referred it is no longer the Church's concern has not occurred to the Church with its gall. The woman might change her mind after she is referred. If it is the Church's concern that she may have an abortion then it must be the right of the Church to stop her by force as well. After all, if the Church has the right to interfere then why not?

