Planned Parenthood and the Birth Control Pill

By Jim Sedloki

IN 1986, WE SHOCKED MANY legislators in Dutchess County, New York, by handing out a flyer claiming that Planned Parenthood pushes drugs on teens. "What drugs?" the legislators asked.

"The birth control pill," we told them. "They look at us as if we were crazy. But we stand by our accusation. As the horrendous effects of the prescription drug are better known, and as Planned Parenthood continues to give it to our children, it becomes more obvious that Planned Parenthood is pushing a very dangerous drug. We care too much about women and children to allow Planned Parenthood to go unchallenged!"

Their love affair with the birth control pill is the key to understanding Planned Parenthood's business. Finally, Planned Parenthood's founder, Margaret Sanger, was personally involved in securing money for the research that led to development of the Pill. Planned Parenthood has been reaping financial dividends from that investment ever since.

Many people fight Planned Parenthood because they see the Planned Parenthood Federation of America (PPFA) running America's largest chain of surgical abortion facilities (approximately 112) and being America's largest single provider of surgical abortion (132,000 per year). But PPFA has always contended that abortion is not its main business—"the pill sells itself." But PPFA is a very large business. More than 10% of all the abortions in the United States and that less than 10% of its income is derived from abortion. What else, then, is Planned Parenthood's business?

Besides abortion, the birth control pill is its business. Most Planned Parenthood activity involves instruction for, or provision of, means of contraception. (Fear of Planned Parenthood's so-called "contraceptives"—the Pill, the IUD, Norplant and Depo-Provera—sometimes act to prevent the implantation of an already conceived human being.) In 1991, Planned Parenthood reported that 1,813,000 women had purchased birth control devices from its 922 clinics around the country. Of these customers, 88% purchased birth control pills; 9% purchased condoms; and 8% purchased other devices.

Birth control pills are sold by the "cycle." A cycle is simply a month's supply. Pharmacists for Life did a survey to discover how much pharmacies typically charge for a cycle of birth control pills. The charges vary by area of the country and by type of pill. Typically, pharmacies charge $25 to $26 for a cycle.

STOPP (Stop Planned Parenthood International) conducted an independent survey of a number of PPFA affiliates and found that Planned Parenthood affiliates charge $5 to $15 for a cycle of pills. PPFA also charges on a sliding scale so that poorer women (and teens) can receive the pills for less (or even for free).

As part of its survey, Pharmacists for Life determined that pharmacists typically pay drug companies $14 to $17 for a cycle. PPFA, then, sells its pills for less than pharmacists are paying to buy them. How can PPFA afford to do that?

This question was answered in the October 1991 issue of the newsletter of the National Family Planning and Reproductive Health Association. According to an article in that issue, family planning providers around the

United States pay an average of $0.38 to $2.40 for a cycle of pills, with most pills costing $0.65 to $1.50 each.

The article specifically stated that these figures did not include "Planned Parenthood or other non-profit grants." This implied that Planned Parenthood pays less than $1.40 for a cycle of pills that it resells for $2.40. More importantly, this article indicated that PPFA receives a tremendous profit from the sale of these pills.

To confirm this, we searched through hundreds of Planned Parenthood financial statements. Unfortunately, these statements routinely include Planned Parenthood's pill business under a general heading of "Clinic Income" and "Clinic Expenses." As we kept looking, however, God provided us with the proof we needed. Like most nonprofit organizations, each PPFA affiliate files a yearly federal Form 990 tax return, which gives financial information about the operation of that particular affiliate. One Form 990, filed by Planned Parenthood of Dutchess-Ulster, Inc., lists its "contraceptives" revenue in detail. According to this report, in 1985 Planned Parenthood of Dutchess-Ulster, Inc., purchased contraceptive supplies for $43,671.66 and then sold them for $150,197, a profit of $106,525.64.

A check of their operations showed that Planned Parenthood of Dutchess-Ulster, Inc., operates just like other PPFA affiliates, offering birth control pills at $5 per cycle (one of the lowest PP prices in the country) and also charging on a sliding scale. Yet this affiliate made a tremendous profit from birth control sales.

Travelling around the country last year, we tested our findings by talking about the profits PP makes from birth control sales. The response of a PP affiliate in Springfield, Illinois, was typical. After we told reporters about PP's profit on birth control pills, the reporters asked the local PP executive director about it; she confirmed our statement by saying, "Planned Parenthood makes money by selling contraceptives."

With this basic information, we can estimate the total profit Planned Parenthood makes from the sale of birth control pills to American women.

The latest data from PPFA indicate that they have "almost 1.9 million contraceptive clients." We know that 83% of these (1,577,000 women and girls) are under 18, with a high of 900,000 who are teenagers. If each of them purchases pills an average of six times a year, and pays an average of $5 per pill, then their birth control pills represent $85,158,000 in income for PPFA. Using what we know of PPFA's costs, we can estimate that birth control pills alone provide them an annual profit exceeding $64 million.

Not surprisingly, Planned Parenthood is continually seeking ways to attract more birth control dollars. During 1992, PPFA launched an effort to change federal law so that birth control pills could be dispensed without a prescription.

This effort failed when the U.S. Food and Drug Administration canceled an advisory panel's plans to issue a prescription.

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for $61,030. It sold these for $252,015. In addition, their Form 990 said that PPFA sold the contraceptive for $262,212. If we add the inventory reduction to the cost of the contraceptives sold, we find that this affiliate of Planned Parenthood made a profit of $189,983 in one year from the sale of birth control devices.

prescriptions a "nuisance idea." "There are enough dangers about the pill that it's just unthinkable that it should be dispensed without any medical involvement," he said.

In 1993, Planned Parenthood launched a new scheme. This one would allow the distribution of the Pill to women (including teens) without a medical exam. (For years, PPFA and its affiliates have strongly recommended that physicians take a complete medical and family history before prescribing the birth control pill. Physical examinations should include special reference to blood pressure, breasts, abdominal and pelvic organs.) This time, Planned Parenthood succeeded. Health care providers across the United States may now prescribe oral contraceptives without first conducting a physical exam of their patients. Dr. Michael Pelicic, PPFA's chief medical director, said that PP sought the change in the law because of widespread concern that fear of pelvic exams was preventing many young sexually active women (teens) from seeking oral contraceptives.

The push is not in a business. Its business is the pushing of drugs (the birth control pill) primarily to young women and teens. It is making millions from the promiscuous sexual activity of our children, which it encourages in its sexually education programs. It is time we stopped this drug pusher's free access to our children's schools and churches.

References:
8. Washington Post, January 26, 1992, article by VICKI S. WOLF.

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