

# OCC Health Day

## It Was Enlightening, Disturbing

By MARGARET MILLER

Understanding our bodies was the theme, and women who went to Health Day on the Orchard Ridge Campus of Oakland Community College came away with varied kinds of understanding. They learned about breast self-examination and gynecological check-ups. They heard from a trained midwife and a factory worker and were given some practical home first aid advice by a registered nurse.

Some had pap smears and tuberculosis tests, free as part of the day's program.

And they heard some profoundly disturbing words about "contraceptives" now available for birth control.

The day's shockers were ideas put forth by Belita Cowan and Kay Weiss, who came from Ann Arbor to talk about "The Morning After Pill, the IUD and Treatment of Women in Medical Texts."

Miss Cowan said they represented the total membership of Advocates for Medical Information, and Miss Weiss added:

"We're medical consumers, not professionals. We've tried to learn through reading as much as possible about medication and techniques used on women by the medical profession."

"It's the only way to find out some of these things. The reading matter they recommended is found in medical journals."

"We think that if women can read the Ladies Home Journal they can read the New England Journal of Medicine," Miss Cowan said. Their contention, in brief, was that:

"The Pill," taken routinely by millions of women is unsafe for many because of the danger of thrombosis.

"The morning-after pill is a massive dose of a synthetic estrogen known as DES, which has been cited as cancer causing in other uses."

"The IUD (intrauterine contraceptive device) works as a contraceptive because it

sets up an inflammation of the walls of the uterus; and antibiotics or even aspirin can reduce the inflammation and thus its effectiveness."

"Ingredients such as mercury are to be found in some vaginal creams and jellies produced for use with the diaphragm."

The women charged that many contraceptives in use now are essentially still in the experimental stage.

"They don't really know what many of them can do so they wait for adverse effects to be reported," Miss Weiss said. "If the total of reports hasn't hit the magic number, the product continues in use."

"I feel that every woman in this room has at one time or another been part of an illegal national experiment."

Miss Cowan said the morning-after pill, so named because it is taken after unprotected intercourse, actually is 10 pills, taken two a day for five days, and containing 2,500 milligrams of diethylstilbestrol, known as DES.

"That's equal to a two-year supply of the estrogen in birth-control pills," Miss Weiss said.

The women said that the ingredient is the same one that has been banned by the Food and Drug Administration from use in cattle as a means of fattening them.

They added that it also is the drug that led to newspaper articles last summer because it was found that daughters of women who had taken it to prevent miscarriage were developing cancers of the vagina.

The drug never has been approved for use in contraception, the women stated, but was given to 1,400 University of Michigan women.

Miss Weiss said a university spokesman had stated no adverse effects were reported among the women "but we checked with 75 of them in a clinic and found that in the cases of 90 per cent there was no follow-up questioning."

"It seems entirely possible," Miss Cowan said, "that women whose mothers used the drug to prevent miscarriage may be some of the very ones now getting this massive dose."

Miss Weiss said physicians "tell you they don't know" how the IUD works.

"But they do know," she declared. "It works by setting off an infection, and if that infection is reduced through antibiotics or aspirin taken for another reason the IUD doesn't operate properly and you could get pregnant."

A member of the audience said she had worked in a clinic and had noted a definite correlation between pregnancies occurring among IUD-wearers and the use of antibiotics.

Marilyn Becker, who came to the Health Day program to lead a workshop dealing with gynecological examinations, said she agreed women should read and become informed.

"But I think," she insisted, "that we as women have the right to insist on proper information being given and above all on money being spent for research to find a means of contraception that is safe."

"I feel that as things stand now, I'm stuck. I must choose between several bad choices," Miss Becker, former resident of New York City, said she had been part of the New York Women's health and Abortion Project, another group seeking to acquire and pass on medical information. She also contended that women should work together to demand respectful treatment, particularly in medical clinics — and for administration of free tests for vaginal cancer and for gonorrhea.

Another speaker for Health Day, Nick Muller, is a native of South Africa, where she was a midwife by profession.

Coming to this country because of the political situation in her native country, she found midwives are barred by law, and added that this is regrettable.

"Early in this century they were outlawed along with other practical healers by a group that was forerunner of the American Medical Association," she said.

"At that time the quacks were pretty much put out of business, but so were many people who knew a great deal about healing."

Miss Muller said she feels midwives could play an important role in deliveries of babies "because for a big majority of pregnant women it's possible to guarantee a healthy delivery."

"Pre-natal care doesn't start with pregnancy," she said. "You should be sure you are healthy. You would not run a marathon if overweight or out of condition, and you should not try to have a baby that way."

"The black women in Africa have wonderful deliveries because their lives put them in condition for them."

## Pioneer Women Plan Luncheon

The Greater Detroit Council of Pioneer Women will hold its annual Beit Nehama community center luncheon on Thursday, July 26, at noon, at Beth Abraham-Hillel Synagogue in West Bloomfield.

The affair has been scheduled for members who have assumed the cost of maintaining a child at the center for a minimum of one month.

Beit Nehama, named in honor of Emma Lazaroff Schaver, of Southfield, is located in Hamat Eliyahu, a suburb of Rishon le Zion, the oldest city in Israel. The building was constructed and has been maintained exclusively by Pioneer Women in Detroit.

The structure houses three kinds of day care programs as well as academic and vocational training courses for youth and women.

This year, the center is participating in a special summer vacation program for mothers of large families and two of their youngest children. Recipients of the program are drawn from the lowest socio-economic group

of those who have immigrated to Israel. This overall effort involves 1,700 mothers and 2,970 children who are experiencing a period of rest, relaxation and education for the first time in their lives.

Norma Goldberg, vocalist; will provide the musical portion of the afternoon.

Mrs. Morris Raskin of Southfield is chairman of the day and Mrs. Victor Ross of Southfield is the newly elected president of the Greater Detroit Council of Pioneer Women.

Mrs. Norman I. Leemon and Mrs. Milton Weiss, both of Farmington, are co-chairmen of Beit Nehama.

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**SUSIE GOLDBERG** of Southfield, an Oakland County medical assistant, was one of the volunteers participating in Women's Health Day on the Oakland Community College Orchard Ridge campus last week. (Event photo)

**LORRAINE PIESKO** of Farmington Hills was one of more than 100 women who received free TB tests during Women's Health Day at OCC (Event photo)

## Common Sense Is Guide For Home Medication

"Use your common sense—if it seems weird to you you don't do it!"

The words were those of Mrs. Brenda Roeber, registered nurse and mother of five, who spoke on first aid and home treatment of illness during Women's Health Day on the Orchard Ridge campus of Oakland Community College.

Common sense-backed by medical know-how—formed the theme of her remarks as she told the women participating in her workshop what to do about fever and stomach upset, constipation, poisoning, burns and cuts.

Some of her advice follows:

**FEVER** — Take aspirin no often than every four hours and for no more than 24 hours. If it causes stomach upset, stop taking it because it can do a lot of damage to the stomachs of some persons. Try instead a product called Tylenol.

Take the cheapest aspirin you can buy. Use a little baking soda with it for the same effect as buffered aspirin.

Flavored baby aspirin is expensive and a temptation to children if they should get hold of the bottle.

**NAUSEA** — Try to find out the cause. If there's a lot of stomach pain, it may be food poisoning. Try warm water with salt or baking soda (up to three or four cups for an adult or two cups for a child) to induce vomiting, but try this just once. For heartburn, try crackers or dry bread.

"Don't get into the habit of drinking baking soda and water," Mrs. Roeber said, "and I don't advise using the grocery store heartburn remedies. We don't know what they can do."

**CONSTIPATION** — Control it with diet and by drinking plenty of water. Don't get worried about it. Don't take laxatives or "cathartic" pills. They're habit-forming and one of the most overused products on the market. Use a soapy water enema or a glycerine suppository and then consider how to avoid future trouble through diet.

**DIARRHEA** — Give the stomach a rest, except the case of a very young child or an aged person. They may be subject to dehydration, which can be identified by hot or glossy-looking skin. In such cases, seek medical help immediately.

**POISONING** — There are two general kinds of poisoning, and both need emergency treatment.

In the case of swallowing of pills or other medication, or a soapy product, try to induce vomiting.

If the substance swallowed is a household product or a cosmetic solution, do NOT induce vomiting, as it can do damage coming up as well as going down. Give milk, bread, cornstarch or vinegar to neutralize.

In both cases, get the victim quickly to the hospital and take along the bottle that contained the substance swallowed.

**BURNS** — Use cold running water or ice to reduce pain and inflammation and give you time to assess the damage. Later use vaseline to protect or Furacin ointment to help heal.

**CUTS AND SCRAPER** — Hydrogen peroxide is the best thing to use on an open wound, but it must be fresh. Keep it in a cool, dark place, and if it stops bubbling when poured out, replace it. Don't use iodine; it burns.

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