

# Taking the worry out of being close

By JACKIE KLEIN

Planned Parenthood takes the worry out of being close. Since the organization's Washtenaw County League opened a clinic in Ann Arbor last December, three specially trained staff physicians have performed nearly 1,000 early abortion procedures.

But the real goal of Planned Parenthood is better birth control methods, said Ellen Macdonald, director of social services at the busy clinic.

"We view abortion as a back-up procedure that could be eliminated with education about preventive measures," she said. "There is a pathetic lack of knowledge in this area."

"Many women equate birth control with the pill. If the pill makes them sick, they stop using it and they don't think of finding a substitute," Mrs. Macdonald said. The clinic's personnel have been accused of convincing women to have abortions, but that isn't the case.

We have experienced, professional counselors who help patients understand their pregnancies and the options available," she explained. "Most of the women have already made up their minds to terminate, the pregnancy."

"Each woman is counseled to make sure the abortion is her idea and she isn't being pressured by someone else. It's her decision to live with. Our philosophy is that every child should

be wanted and the individual has the right to choose."

THE CLINIC's policy is that no abortion procedure will be performed later than 10 weeks from the last menstrual period.

Most trimester (14 weeks) abortions are performed in free standing clinics on an out-patient basis and later procedures are done in hospitals.

Other services the clinic offers are pelvic and breast examinations, pap smears, VD testing and treatment, pregnancy testing and counseling, sterilization and infertile.

The teen clinic services include sexual counseling, individually pre-

scribed contraceptive methods and referrals for abortion and pre-natal care.

The vasectomy clinic offers surgery, counseling and follow-up examinations.

"No one is turned away for lack of money," said Mrs. Macdonald. "Medicaid covers therapeutic abortions but few Blue Cross policies do. It's rough on women who aren't poor enough to qualify for ADC, which provides medical aid, and yet can't afford \$35 for an abortion."

Patients fees and donations support the abortion services in the clinic. Health, Education and Welfare grants don't fund abortions but supplement the cost of contraceptive measures.

## After clinic abortions

# The 'circus' is over for these women

By JACKIE KLEIN

"Where the circus is over. What a relief. I've got five kids from 11 to 21. I'll never go through another surprise."

The women relax on reclining chairs in the cheerful recovery room of the Planned Parenthood Clinic in Ann Arbor. They munch energy-giving graham crackers, sip juice and compare abortions performed only minutes ago.

"Those who are relieved of a burden they couldn't face, chatter incessantly, exchange confidences, and vow they'll never come back. The ones who are silent and depressed, chain smoke and light back the tears. Emotions too painful to reveal are expressed on pale, drawn faces and clenched hands."

The circus is over for Miss B. 27, who gave up her child born out of wedlock nine years ago. She didn't believe in abortion then, not the back alley kind.

"I've been in a frenzy," she says, nervously biting into a cracker after cracker. "I was negotiating a contract and God knows if I made the right decision."

The man I'm going with doesn't

want any children and neither do I. We don't dig the American concept that you get married, raise a bunch of kids and live happily ever after."

Miss B., who thought she was pregnant four days after she missed her period, had a procedure called "menstrual extraction." An outgrowth of the clinic's insistence on performing early abortions, the extraction can be performed before a positive pregnancy test is obtained.

Mrs. C. (with the five children) has never used birth control methods and relied on the calendar. "I'm 45 and I'd have a nervous breakdown if I had another child to raise. This pregnancy was a real shocker, but it will never happen again."

Mrs. C. will have a tubal ligation. Miss B. has been fitted with an intra-uterine device at the clinic.

The women came in for counseling the day before and the medical procedure was scheduled for the next day. Mrs. Ellen Macdonald, director of social services, suggests this method to avoid pressure.

The counseling sessions are aimed to assure that the patient is making a rational decision and isn't being pushed by her parents, husband or

boyfriend or by lack of knowledge of alternate solutions to a problem pregnancy.

The average age of women seeking abortion is 20 to 25, says Mrs. Macdonald. Most are unmarried and fear their life will be disrupted by an unwanted child. The married women usually have children close in age and don't want any more or they're not ready to have a family.

The clinic requires parental consent for patients under 18, but if the parents are pushing for the abortion against the wishes of the girl, the clinic will refuse to perform the procedure.

The counseling sessions provide a thorough understanding of the medical procedure and contraceptive information that will enable the patient to avoid another unwanted pregnancy.

If the patient has decided to go ahead with an abortion, she is given a pelvic examination, urine and blood tests. A laminaria, compressed seaweed that dilates the cervix slowly and absorbs body fluids as it expands, is inserted during the pelvic examination.

The patient's cervix dilates during the night, lessening the risk of damage to tissue that may increase

chances of later miscarriage or premature delivery.

The next day, contents of the uterus are evacuated by suction using a plastic vacuum aspirator. Counselors remain with their patients during the procedure to provide comfort and explanations.

Nurses circulate among the patients in the recovery room, taking blood pressures, making small talk and discussing birth control procedures. Appointments are made for post-abortion checkups and detailed instructions for after care are handed out.

Some of the women are drowsy from the aspirin, valium and darvon they were given to help them relax. General anesthetics aren't administered.

In less than two hours, Miss B. is ready to drive home. She's going to celebrate with lobster and champagne.

Mrs. C. will go bowling in a few days.

Only two of the women are having abortion blues. The rate is lower than women who suffer post-partum depression, says Mrs. Macdonald.

It's all part of the right to choose. Planned Parenthood believes once is enough.



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The all-school variety show is called Our Thing and features gymnastics, dramatic interpretations, scenes from musicals, singing, dancing and jazz presentations. It begins at 8 p.m.

Tickets may be purchased in advance from students or at the door. The money will go to produce a spring musical at the school.

For additional information, call Susan Rohrer at Lederle, 331-8181.

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