

PRESS RELEASE

WOMEN'S ORGANIZATIONS DEMAND WITHDRAWAL OF CONTRACEPTIVE INJECTIONS

All India Democratic Women's Association, National Federation of Indian Women, Purogami Mahila Sangathan, Jagori and Saheli gheraoed the Drugs Controller of India to day, demanding that the licences given to the contraceptive injections Depo-Provera and Noresterat be withdrawn. The approval of these injectable contraceptives in India is clear example of the havoc multinationals can play with the lives and health of the Indian people.

Depo-Provera is a product of the Upjohn Ltd. USA which is known to be unsafe and was not approved as a contraceptive in US for more than 25 years. This preparation has not even undergone the necessary clinical trials in India which would establish its safety.

Noresterat has undergone fifteen years of clinical trials in India which have demonstrated its hazardous nature and the fact that it is not acceptable to most Indian women. In the court case against it the Government has failed to provide evidence of its safety. Noresterat is an invention of Schering AG.

Both these injections have been available for more than thirty years and have been used extensively on poor women, on ethnic minorities, inmates of mental asylums and other vulnerable sections in the first world and in repressive population control programmes in the third world. No where in the first world are these considered contraceptives of first choice by the medical system.

In order to induce a long acting effect these drugs are injected in large quantities in the body far in excess of what is needed to achieve contraceptive effect. This results in complete disruption of the cyclical processes in the women's body. Common side effects are, menstrual chaos, ranging from complete

clotting disorders, hypertension, extreme weight gain, hirsutism, acne etc.

The drugs pass through breast milk and if a woman accidentally becomes pregnant or is pregnant when she receives the injection she is likely to give birth to a baby with low birth weight and a high chance of mortality. In addition the child thus born may have congenital malformation affecting its genitalia.

There are enough doubts to suggest that these drugs are carcinogenic. Schering AG and Up John have left no stone unturned to invalidate the research findings in this regard.

Women who use these contraceptives find their fertility impaired.

In its country of origin, Norelgestat is meant to be used only by women who are unable to use any other contraceptive. Although in October 1992, USFDA has approved Depo-Provera, this is specifically with the stipulation that UP John collects more data on Osteoporosis among Depo users. USFDA has also recognized that Depo-Provera causes birth defects.

The marketing of these contraceptives in India is completely untenable given the lack of a monitoring system and the refusal of the medical community to be held accountable for its deeds. The health status of Indian women is already low and they do not need additional illnesses induced by hazardous contraceptives.

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