

SAY NO TO INJECTABLE CONTRACEPTIVES!
RESIST COERCIVE POPULATION POLICY!
OPPOSE MULTINATIONAL DRUG INDUSTRY!

The Govt. of India has decided to soon introduce Net-en, a long-term hormonal injectable contraceptive in official birth control programme for mass application. Net-en and Depo-Provera, another similar injectable hormone contraceptive, have long been pressed by multinational drug companies for Govt. programme, but being thwarted by protests from various concerned sections of people, GOI restricted Depo-Provera for use in the Private Medicare. The litigation in the Supreme Court restraining GOI from using Net-en has recently been disposed of on the assurance of the Health Ministry that Net-en will be introduced in such places only where adequate facilities for follow-up and counselling are available. Net-en will be disastrous for the health of the Indian women and all concerned should know why, so that resistance from all corners may be able to stop GOI from this anti-women project. Concerned women's and other groups in Delhi have already launched protest actions and resistance campaign. We in West Bengal have met under the platform of 'Janaswasthya Adhikar Committee' (Health Rights Committee) and started a resistance campaign.

Net-en is a synthetic progestin that mimics natural female sex hormone progesterone and given in high-dose injection every two months prevents conception by disrupting the natural physiological mechanism by ways not yet fully determined. In various trials, it was found to cause side effects in unacceptably high percentages of so-called volunteers and the numbers of dropouts were also very high. It may cause:

- serious menstrual disturbances ranging from heavy and prolonged bleeding to total stoppage. Infertility may result.
- thickening of blood vessels and cardiovascular diseases,
- development of blood clot at unexpected sites resulting in damage to heart, lungs, brain etc.,
- loss of bone density increasing risk of fracture,
- weight gain or even loss of weight,
- increased risk of cancer,
- deformity of the foetus in the womb.

Natural sex hormones perform certain other very important functions e.g. progesterone plays a part in the development of healthy nerve cells and in brain and thyroid functions. The synthetic Net-en is unable to perform such jobs. The point is no worthwhile research has yet been made to look for serious adverse effects of Net-en in the other body systems.

Further Net-en is not suitable for mass use. In order to determine suitability, one needs the service of no less a person than a doctor who is capable of handling physical and lab examinations to find out that the woman is not pregnant, has normal bi-phasic cycles, is not vulnerable to the risks of breast cancer, genital cancer, thrombo-embolic disorders, cardiovascular disease, diabetes, irregular menstruation, liver dysfunction etc. thus selecting the suitable woman the doctor will have to explain patiently in understandable language to her the mechanism of action, all possible side-effects and complications for which proper treatment ought to be assured in the course of obtaining informed consent of the user. Thereafter, the doctor is to perform all such

tests and monitor relevant bodily functions at every injection episode. There is at present no Govt. medical center in the entire country that is prepared to offer such specialized services to every contraceptive-seeker. In fact, they have little experience of the practice of informed consent. Our medical centers are more accustomed to treat the fertile women with contempt, neglect or coercion. That is why there is a serious risk of spreading HIV and Hepatitis B through this project.

Though hormone injectables are endowed with being safe, cheap, easy to use etc. by the multinationals and the Govt. these are not yet popular in their countries of origin even after few decades of their invention. In Euro-America it is given mainly to mentally handicapped persons, prisoners, third world immigrants etc. At present, it is the costliest among contraceptives. Unlike other contraceptives women cannot get rid of it in case of complications. The countries/societies who achieved success in controlling their population size never needed or employed injectable hormones. Though the last national population policy declares the commitment of the Govt. towards 'voluntary and informed choice' and 'target-free approach', this project is meant for violation of the commitment.

Frankly our patriarchal Govt. is afraid to promote contraceptive for male use and is also not serious about providing contraceptives to poor women. Our women actually need and seek contraceptives as they suffer tremendously from the misery of repeated pregnancies and rearing of children. Already these injectable contraceptives are smuggled from neighbouring countries and rural women are taking it from quacks at a cost of Rs.300/- to Rs.500/- per injection. False propaganda are rampant e.g. it can cause abortion or year-long infertility etc. Now the NPP admits that the unmet need of contraceptives is 28%. The visible and declared eagerness of the Govt. behind this project is due to the pressure of the multinationals. Those countries who are able to exercise their independence have resisted the pressure from the multinationals, but our Govt. has succumbed. That is why, not only hazardous contraceptives but various discriminatory, punitive and anti-democratic measures e.g. denying ration cards, education in Govt. schools, Govt. jobs, various other welfare entitlements etc. are being imposed by various state Govt.

It is necessary that the facts surrounding this project be propagated to all sections of people including doctors and health workers. Protest actions are launched at every corner. Concerned persons and organizations are requested to send protest letters to the Prime Minister and the Health Minister of India.

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