

How Contraceptives harm your marriage... and how Natural Family Planning can help



Enthusiastic crowd listening to Dr Ligaya Acosta speak on Love & Relationship



From Pro-Choice to Pro-Life: Dr Ligaya Acosta

For 28 years, Ligaya Acosta was an avid promoter of contraceptives and sterilisation with the department of health in the Philippines. Her life changed however, when she was designated as Programme Manager for Natural Family Planning in early 2004, which led her to discover the deadly deception of contraceptives and the harm it is causing to numerous families. Now Executive director of Human Life International Asia Pacific, the largest international, pro-life, pro-family, pro-woman organisation in the world. Having completed a short speaking tour in Singapore, she shares with Nick Chui her thoughts on promoting strong marriages.

Do contraceptives really harm marriages? Many people would think that they actually help marriages...

Many people are deceived into thinking that contraceptives will enhance their marriage. They are portrayed as helping couples obtain "peace of mind" while enjoying sexual intercourse without fear of an unwanted pregnancy.

What is not usually advertised are the very serious and horrible documented side effects on physical health and the toll it can take on the marital relationship. Indeed, alarm bells should already be ringing when you realise that using contraceptives is after all a procedure not to correct something which has gone wrong in the body, but can actually destroy

or disrupt the healthy organs of the reproductive system.

I will give you a few examples

On the use of oral contraceptives:

The International Agency for Research on Cancer, an extension of the World Health Organisation, released for example a monograph on July 29, 2005 where it's researchers concluded that combined oral contraceptives is carcinogenic (cancer causing) to humans. Users of oral contraceptives put themselves at much higher risk of getting cervical, breast and liver cancer. You can read a summary from the August 2005 issue of the *Lancet Oncology*.

If you are not afraid of cancer, you might also want to know that the pill has also been known to cause mood disorders, irritability and may lead to a permanent loss of sex drive. Indeed, a study conducted by Drs Irwin Goldstien and Claudia Panzer at Boston University Medical Center in 2005, found that even after a woman stops taking the pill for about a year, the amount of sex hormone binding globulin (SHBG) – a protein produced in the liver that lowers testosterone levels are still double that of women who are not on the pill. So if you think that the pill actually helps in your marital life, think again.

On sterilisation (vasectomy & ligation):

Sadly, some people opt for sterilisation, wanting to seek a "final" solution to their marital difficulties. Again, what they are probably unaware of are the very serious side effects resulting from sterilisation.

Deaths resulting from complications affect about 3 to 25 women per 100,000 depending on the choice of method.¹ Also, not known to many people, ligation is not 100 percent effective in preventing pregnancy. Should a pregnancy occur, the chance of it resulting in an ectopic pregnancy where the fetus is lodged in the fallopian tube is between 4 to 73 percent.²

For those who wish, it is possible to undergo a sterilisation reversal. In the Philippines, my diocese has a dedicated team of doctors who will help patients who request this.

On the Intra-Uterine Device (IUD):

I call the IUD the device of death because it is really not a contraceptive but an abortifacient. A small object made of plastic, copper or stainless steel that is inserted into the cavity of the uterus. The IUD cause changes in the uterus lining in an attempt to prevent the implantation of the embryo (the early developing human being).

Essentially, the IUD is potentially harmful to the uterus of the women leading very often to infection and inflammation. It is really common sense. If you have a small splinter in your hand, your hand gets infected. How much more for a foreign body in your uterus, which is essentially what the IUD is? Indeed, according to a literature review of the journals *Contraception* and *Fertility and Sterility* over the period 1980-1995, harms associated with the IUD include sterility, perforation of the uterus, colon, bladder or small or large intestine, deep embedding of the IUD in the uterus, and pelvic inflammatory disease.³

On the Condom:

The condom is arguably the contraceptive with the least unpleasant side effects. Nevertheless, when compared to the other contraceptive methods, it has a 14 percent failure rate.⁴ This means of course that the temptation to abort becomes very real should an unplanned pregnancy occur.

How then can the use and practice of Natural Family Planning avoid the pitfalls of contraceptives?

The Billings Ovulation Method (BOM) of Natural Family planning is 99 percent effective and completely free of the nasty side effects associated with other contraceptives. It can be used by all women whether young or old, premenopausal and it is also suitable

for women with irregular menstrual cycles.

During the menstrual cycle of a woman, she produces cervical mucus. If she examines it, she will notice that sometimes it is thick and whitish and sometimes it is soft and stringy like egg white. When it is thick and whitish, it means that she is not fertile. When it is soft and springy like egg white, it means that she is fertile.

If you would want to increase your chances of conceiving a child, you choose to have sexual intercourse during the fertile period. If you would want to postpone pregnancy for serious reasons, then you can have sexual intercourse during the infertile period.

This method is so simple, natural and inexpensive, that they even teach blind people in Calcutta with a great degree of success. And really, it is wonderful for the woman's sexual health as she would be able to detect any abnormalities in her reproductive system.

Some people say that it takes "too much discipline" or that "their spouses are un-cooperative"

In everything you do, if you don't have discipline, or if you are deliberately un-cooperative, you are courting disaster so why should it be different in the realm of sexuality? One of the tragedies in married life is divorce. Couples who marry do not plan for their marriages to end in divorce.

What if I tell you that a preliminary study shows that couples who practice Natural Family Planning have a divorce rate of only 0.2%?⁵ Surely for couples who want a marriage with a firm foundation, that is something to take note of.

Indeed the need to practice abstinence from marital relations in natural family planning is precisely that which contributes to enhanced marital relationships. Imagine for one moment that you like ice cream very much. Imagine again, that you

get to eat ice cream every day, morning, evening and night. It would be fair to say that after a while, you would be sick of it. Too much of a good thing is boring.

Now imagine that you can have sex anytime you want, without "fear" of unwanted pregnancies. Would it be too much to say that after a while, couples actually become "sick" of it? Or that they feel "used" by each other?

Indeed, NFP won't work if the husband and wife don't cooperate. Knowing the "wet" and "dry" periods of the women entails communication between spouses. Then again, communication is the key to a successful marriage and what better way to practice this within this most intimate sphere of the couple's life?

There is always joy in the splendor of truth and I hope that couples will experience the joy that comes when they are convinced of the beauty of natural family planning.

Thank you very much!

- Robert A. Hatcher et al *Contraceptive Technology* (16th Revised Edition) New York: Irvington Publishers Inc 1994 p 382
- Ibid. chapter 22 "female and male sterilization"
- Brian Clowes "Facts of Life; Abortifacients: intrauterine Devices" Available: <http://www.hli.org/index.php/abortifacients/250?task=view>
- Robert A. Hatcher *Contraceptive technology* (17th Revised Edition) New York: Ardent Media Inc 1998 Table31-1 p.800
- Mercedes Arzu Wilson *The Practice of Natural Family Planning versus the use of Artificial Birth Control in Catholic Social Science Review* Nov 2002, Available: <http://www.familyplanning.net/CSSRPublishCOLOR.pdf>