

POLICY & PRACTICE

Misconceptions on Menstruation

Many women have little knowledge about how their menstrual cycle works, according to the results of a recent national poll commissioned by the Association of Reproductive Health Professionals. For example, about two-thirds of women surveyed said it is "natural" for a woman to get her period even when she is taking oral contraceptives. Women were not aware that the monthly bleeding that occurs with oral contraceptives is withdrawal bleeding, not menstrual bleeding. "This survey clearly demonstrates that women need more information to be able to understand their menstrual cycles, especially what effect hormonal contraceptives have on their periods," Dr. Beth Jordan, ARHP Medical Director, said in a statement. The survey findings are online at www.arhp.org/2005MenstruationSurvey.

States Vary on Contraceptive Access

According to a new analysis from the Guttmacher Institute, California, Alaska, South Carolina, Alabama, and New York are setting a national example of how to reduce unintended pregnancies in the United States, while Nebraska, North Dakota, Indiana, Ohio, and Utah are falling short in opening up access to contraceptives. The nonprofit institute, which focuses on reproductive health research, conducted a state-by-state analysis of access to contraception. The states were evaluated based on how well they met the need for subsidized contraceptive services and supplies, whether local laws were likely to help or hinder access to contraception, and the amount of public funding for family planning. A complete ranking of the states is available online at www.guttmacher.org/statecenter/ccfs.html.

Environmental Fertility Risks

More research and improved testing are needed to gauge the impact of environmental toxins on reproductive health and fertility, said Resolve: The National Infertility Association, which is calling on researchers to look into exposure from cigarette smoke, alcohol, heavy metals, plastics, mercury, lead, and agricultural pesticides. A Centers for Disease Control and Prevention report said that the number of couples reporting difficulty becoming pregnant or carrying a pregnancy to term has grown from 6.1 million in 1995 to 7.3 million in 2002. "While we recognize that most cases of infertility cannot be prevented, we believe that through more research, better testing, and increased awareness of knowledge about environmental contaminants and their impact on reproductive health, we can take action to prevent some cases of infertility and improve pregnancy outcomes," Resolve President and CEO Joseph C. Isaacs said in a statement.

Wisconsin Doctors Want Cap Back

Wisconsin doctors hailed the state assembly's passage of a bill from Rep. Curt Gielow (R) that would reinstate a cap on noneconomic damages at \$750,000. The 10-year-old cap was overturned by the Wisconsin Supreme Court in 2005, "throwing Wisconsin's once envied medical liability system into turmoil," accord-

ing to a statement from the Wisconsin Hospital Association (WHA) and the Wisconsin Medical Society. Since the dissolution of the cap, physicians have cancelled their recruiting visits to the state, and premiums for the Injured Patients and Families Compensation Fund (IPFCF) have increased by 25%, the associations claim. "Four awards have already exceeded the previous cap, the number of lawsuits in excess of \$1 million are up by over 22%, and a stunning \$8.4 million verdict was handed down in Dane County," the statement said. "This bill helps doctors concentrate

on what concerns them the most: caring for patients," said Dr. Susan Turney, chief executive officer and executive vice president of the Wisconsin Medical Society. "It doesn't change the fact that injured patients are fully compensated for their economic losses yet helps to maintain access to health care in Wisconsin." The state's high court had ruled that the cap was unconstitutional beyond a reasonable doubt.

Antiabortion Protesters Win Ruling

In the latest abortion-related court ruling, the Supreme Court decided that a federal extortion law—the Hobbs Act—cannot be used against antiabortion protesters. In the

cases *Scheidler v. National Organization for Women*, and *Operation Rescue v. National Organization for Women*, the court overturned the ruling of a federal appeals court and found that the Hobbs Act should be interpreted to apply only to violence committed through robbery or extortion. In its decision, the Supreme Court stated that the 1994 Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances Act was passed specifically to address abortion clinic violence. But Nancy Keenan, president of NARAL Pro-Choice America, said in a statement that the 1994 law had so far been ineffective at stopping the illegal actions of protesters.

—Mary Ellen Schneider

Ultra-Screen[®]

The Earliest and Most Effective Down Syndrome Screen Available

The Choice is Clear...

Screening For Down Syndrome Is Better in the First Trimester Than in the Second Trimester

- Free Beta hCG/PAPP-A/NT
- All Results in First Trimester!
- 91% Detection at a 5% False Positive Rate
- Same Day Results Available (IRASM Program)
- 95% Detection/2% False Positive Rate with Fetal Nasal Bone
- Dried Blood (Simple Fingertick Sampling)
- Highest T13/T18 Detection Available (98%)
- Provides Separate Twin Reports



ULTRA-SCREEN[®]



NTD Laboratories, Inc.
The Prenatal Screening Specialists

1.888.NTD.LABS | www.NTDLABS.com | Fax 631.425.0811