



Special Reports

Winter 1998

Life Decisions International

vol. i • no. 1

SAVING OUR CHILDREN

by Douglas R. Scott, Jr.

In the 1980s, we were introduced to the phrase “safe sex.” The phrase was later amended to “safer sex,” since no condom is 100 percent effective. While the phrase changed, the message to children did not: “Engage in sexual relations if you feel you are ready. And if you feel you are ready, be ‘responsible’ and use ‘protection.’”

Reliance on Condoms



With the rampant increase in unplanned pregnancies and the spread of HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases, is it not wise to just accept the premise that teenagers are going to have sex regardless of what adults say? After all, times have changed. With the incidents of sexual content on television and film increasing every year, it only makes sense to teach our children to protect themselves.

Not surprisingly, most parents agree on this point. “I would prefer that my children pick up a condom at their school than face a pregnancy or STD,” they reason. “Sure, I’d prefer that they not be sexually active right now so I encourage abstinence, but I’m smart enough to take them to a birth control clinic so they can be protected—just in case.”

Condoms have been the staple of the “prevent sexually transmitted diseases” mentality for many years. There is no question that they have a relatively good success rate (compared to, say, the Iraqi military), but with sexually transmitted diseases on the increase, should we rely on this man-made device to protect our children? Aren’t condoms better than using nothing at all? With lives being destroyed every day, it is time to take another look at what has become virtual condom worship since the onset of the AIDS epidemic.

It is interesting to read the fine print on a Trojan brand condom package:

This product combines a latex condom and a spermicidal lubricant. The spermicide, Nonoxynol-9, reduces the number of active sperm, thereby decreasing the risk of pregnancy if you lose your erection before withdrawal and some semen spill outside the condom. However, the extent of decreased risk has not been established. This condom should not be used as a substitute for combined use of a vaginal spermicide and a condom.

Ramses brand condoms include an insert which reads, in part:

Ramses lubricated latex condoms, when properly used, are highly effective against pregnancy—although no contraceptive can guarantee 100% effectiveness. Any use of Ramses lubricated latex condoms for other than vaginal intercourse can increase the potential of damage to the condom. Ramses condoms, when properly used, may help reduce the risk of catching or spreading many Sexually Transmitted Diseases (“STD’s”) such as syphilis, gonorrhea, chlamydia [sic] infections, genital herpes, and AIDS; however, it cannot eliminate the risk....



It is important to examine these words. As Planned Parenthood admits, contraceptive failure rates come in two categories: “lowest expected” and “typical.” A “lowest expected” failure rate applies to those “whose use is consistent and always correct.” A “typical” failure rate (also known as a “user” failure rate) applies to “those whose use is not consistent or always correct.” Since there are no perfect people, everyone falls under the “typical” failure rate category. Only laboratory tests equipment can provide statistics for “lowest expected” failure rates.

It is conceded that risk of pregnancy and infection is reduced, not eliminated. Of course, this applies to vaginal intercourse only. Any other kind of sexual activity “can increase the potential of damage to the condom.” Since the spread of HIV occurs most easily through anal intercourse, the risk is far greater. What’s more, Planned Parenthood admits that herpes and human papilloma virus (HPV) may shed past the area covered by a condom.

Spermicides to the Rescue

“A Woman’s Guide to Safer Sex,” published by Wyeth-Ayerst Laboratories, warns against keeping condoms “in a pocket, wallet or purse for more than a few hours at a time.” It also notes that Nonoxynol-9 may assist in fighting sexually transmitted diseases. However, “this has not yet been proven in studies.”

An advertisement for a lubricant, which includes Nonoxynol-9, appeared in *Out*, a magazine published by and for homosexuals. A condom package is pictured inside a lifejacket. The text of the copyrighted ad reads:

K-Y Plus.
Protection For Your Protection.

K-Y® Plus with Nonoxynol-9 isn’t just excellent lubrication. It’s added safety for your condom. Because it’s water based, it guards your condom against the friction that can cause tears. And Nonoxynol-9, a highly effective spermicide, offers backup protection for additional peace of mind. These days, it’s smarter to use a condom. It’s even smarter when your condom has a partner. Protect your condom, protect yourself with KY Plus with Nonoxynol-9.

That’s what the manufacturer would have us believe, but *Men’s Fitness* reported just last year that a Family Health International study showed that, “Condoms covered with a film containing nonoxynol-9 provide no more protection against the AIDS virus [HIV] or other STDs than those without the spermicide...”

Playing the Odds

In a letter to *The Washington Post*, C. Michael Roland, editor of *Rubber Chemistry and Technology* and head of the Polymer Properties Section at the Naval Research Laboratory, writes that the reliance

on condoms to stop the spread of HIV is foolhardy. “There are facts...that suggest that rubber contraceptives are inherently unable to make sex safe. The 12% failure rate of condoms in the prevention of pregnancy alone argues against their use for preventing contraction of a fatal disease.”

Roland states that because HIV is smaller than sperm, “the situation is actually worse.” He writes that the approved test for condoms consists of filling samples with water and visually inspecting them for leaks, but this method “has been shown to be inadequate for revealing the presence of holes approaching the dimensions of the AIDS virus (...only 0.1 micron in size).”

It is like sending our children to Las Vegas for a short time. If we tell them they have an 88 percent chance of winning, they are all ready to pack their bags. A twelve percent failure rate is minuscule.

If the same child is asked to use a parachute that has a mere twelve percent failure rate, or ride in an aircraft with the same failure rate, they scoff—and rightly so. We are talking about risking a life. Suggesting they ride in the aircraft anyway, but offering two parachutes, just does not make things seem much better.

This is a case of adults setting children up for a fall. Most young people will escape the physical consequences of sex outside of marriage, but many will not. We could not teach them about abstinence because they surely would not have listened. So we didn’t even try. We just kept preaching the same “protect yourself” message as lives crumbled around us. Just another statistic.

We can do better. Much better.

– Douglas R. Scott, Jr., is president of Life Decisions International and the author of *Bad Choices: A Look Inside Planned Parenthood*.

Special Reports, an official periodical of Life Decisions International (LDI), is published quarterly. Send changes of address to LDI at P.O. Box 75161, Washington, DC 20013-0161. Comments made herein do not necessarily reflect the views of every member of LDI’s Board of Directors, Board of Advisors, or staff. Visit us on the World Wide Web at www.fightpp.org. This publication may be copied so long as it is done in full. It may be quoted so long as proper citation is provided with the quotation.

©1998 Life Decisions International.