

Harry Jackson: OTC Morning-After Pill Is a Pimp's Dream

On April 5, a federal district court judge, Edward Korman, overruled an important decision made by the secretary of health and human services, Kathleen Sebelius, ordering that Plan B One-Step (often referred to as the "morning-after pill") be made available over the counter for anyone 15 years of age or older.

Just this past week, on Wednesday, June 5, a federal appeals court took the following steps, according to Larry Neumeister and Lauran Neergaard in a *USA Today* article: "The brief order issued by the 2nd U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Manhattan permitted two-pill versions of emergency contraception to immediately be sold without restrictions, but the court refused to allow unrestricted sales of Plan B One-Step until it decides the merits of the government's appeal."

Sebelius had overruled an FDA decision to make the morning-after pill available to girls as young as 15. This meant that Plan B would continue to require a prescription for girls 16 and younger and that girls 17 and older would need to show proof of age to the pharmacist to purchase it. The nation was shocked when Korman ignored the oversight of the secretary of health and human services.

High school girls should not be able to use powerful morning-after drugs without conferring with their parents, guardians or doctors. This kind of purchase is not the constitutional right or moral privilege of a minor. Despite the increasingly younger ages at which our children are becoming sexually aware and then sexually active, the government should not usurp the parents' role or authority for many important reasons.

First, over-the-counter access to "emergency contraception" is

a pimp's dream. This is a danger to females of all ages. Secondly, this kind of law may assist child sex trafficking in our country by helping to keep involuntary "sex slaves" on the street. Believe it or not, this is a huge problem in the Washington, D.C., area in which I live. Illicit sex has long been known as the favorite intoxicant of the power-mad D.C. crowd, but the sex slave business reaches the heartland as well. Last summer, the FBI arrested 104 pimps in 57 cities, all of whom were forcing girls between the ages of 13 and 17 into prostitution.

It seems that business interests in the drug's release are currently being considered before the welfare of the patients. The Korman ruling was surprising to many health care providers because hormonal birth control methods like this one present special risks for women with other health issues, such as diabetes, liver problems and smoking. It is also generally understood that sexually active women need to be under the regular care of an obstetrician-gynecologist to ensure that their reproductive systems remain healthy and to give them regular screenings for sexually transmitted diseases.

Proponents of the judge's ruling claim that the over-the-counter availability of Plan B would not disrupt the doctor-patient relationship. The measure, they claim, is only to allow responsible women to purchase Plan B on the weekends or holidays. The judge dismissed concerns for minors, saying, "This case is not about the potential misuse of Plan B by 11-year-olds. ... The number of 11-year-olds using these drugs is likely to be miniscule."

Contrary to the judge's concepts, even President Obama, in support of Sebelius, noted the possibility of misuse by children and the side effects of the drug. A Kaiser Permanente study backs up the president's conclusions. It demonstrated that at least 8 percent of girls under 17 could be expected to use Plan B incorrectly. Misuse of this drug can result in an ectopic pregnancy, a dangerous condition which can cause

hemorrhage or death. Common side effects of Plan B, when used correctly, include abnormal bleeding, nausea, lower abdominal pain, fatigue, headache and dizziness. Any of these physical effects would concern a caring parent.

President Obama added questions about the judgment of the youngest users of this drug. He said simply, "The reason Kathleen ... could not be confident that a 10-year-old or an 11-year-old going to a drugstore should *not* be able—alongside bubble gum or batteries—to buy a medication that potentially, if not used properly, could have an adverse effect."

Most parents quickly assert that Judge Korman's decision is wrong. Abuse of this kind of drug in our era is inevitable. Consider this: The FDA decided recently not to approve any generic versions of the prescription painkiller OxyContin because they could be crushed into powder and snorted or injected, as the name-brand version was for many years. (OxyContin's manufacturers have been forced to develop a different kind of tablet in order to prevent abuse.)

How can we understand the dangers of OxyContin and miss the problems with the morning-after pill? Ruling that the FDA should have no responsibility to restrict the sale of a drug that would endanger children—by empowering rapists, pedophiles, pimps and sex traffickers to cover up their crimes—seems like a travesty of justice. The judge is out of touch with the culture. In fact, he needs a refresher course in common sense!

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