

Update from the Director, Kevin Voss, on the "Morning-After" Pill...

Many Christian pharmacists feel threatened and confused by a possible future FDA decision to approve over-the-counter sales of the "morning-after" pill (also called emergency contraception or EC for short). It is basically a high dose of the same hormones found in the Pill taken within 3 days after intercourse and again 12 hours later. Karen Pearl, President of Planned Parenthood, has threatened to sue if the FDA decides against non-prescription sales of the drug. Christian pharmacists are concerned for several reasons. Taking high levels of hormones can cause serious side effects which should be monitored by a doctor. Use of this drug may seem to legitimize sexual activity outside of marriage. Also, the morning-after pill does not protect from AIDS or other sexually-transmitted diseases. And there is the concern that unsupervised use of EC could cause abortions. Package inserts say one way that EC works is by preventing a fertilized egg from implanting into the lining of the uterus-which would be an abortion; although, to my knowledge, there has been no scientific evidence to prove that point. Sadly, many Christian pharmacists may lose their jobs if they in good conscience refuse to provide EC on demand. We need to keep them in our prayers and to watch as this serious issue unfolds in the days ahead.

Update on "The Culture of Life" (submitted by Loraine Rathman, Ph.D., Deaconess Candidate)

In 1995, Pope John Paul II coined the phrases "culture of death" and "culture of life" in a document called the Gospel of Life. He described a struggle between the two. On one hand, the culture of death finds its roots in the belief that "everything is relative," and there are no absolutes. With no clear right and wrong, it maintains religiously based ethics are antiquated and in need of revision.

Relativism and a culture of death justify the direct, intentional ending of the lives of unborn children, the very ill, the aged, and the physically and cognitively disabled. Some say it is compassionate to take these lives. Some view the lives of those unable to contribute to society as useless, inconvenient, and unwanted, imposing an emotional and financial burden. In need of extensive or total care, not only are the dependent considered void of any quality of life, but they are also said to deprive the caregivers of their quality of life. A culture of death withdraws care rather than provides it as required from physicians by the traditional Hippocratic Oath.

A culture of death also rationalizes cloning and "embryonic" stem cell research. Due to the "potential" such technology and research may have on curing serious illnesses such as

Parkinson's, the destruction of human life in the process is justified. To date, however, embryonic research has not produced any medical breakthroughs.

On the other hand, the culture of life finds its roots in the belief that there are some clear absolutes. One such absolute declares all human life is sacred under all circumstances from conception through natural death. Grounded in the belief that God is our Creator, Christians in particular believe in the sanctity of all human life. Each unique individual is created for a purpose by God who is the author of both life and death. Therefore, the culture of life could never justify intentionally taking the lives of the helpless, the defenseless.

While there are those in need of extensive and total care, rather than hasten their death, the culture of life seeks ways to protect, provide care, and enhance their lives. Such care takes time and energy and money. A culture of life enthusiastically supports adult stem cell research. Adult stem cell research does not destroy a human life in the process and, in fact, has already made some remarkable medical breakthroughs. The culture of life actually encompasses more. It extends help to all those in need-the hungry, the poor, the sick, the homeless, the prisoner, the addict, and those who are overwhelmed by the problems of everyday living.

In noting the differences between a culture of death and a culture of life, however, we cannot cast stones, for none of us wants to be a burden or reach a critical point where difficult decisions need to be made. We will all make mistakes amid this struggle. We are all sinners and need God's grace granted through His Son. Trusting in our merciful God, we need to better understand one another in this struggle, fervently seeking His wisdom and will based on His inspired and timeless Word.

Update on the Concordia Center for Bioethics (Abbreviated CBI)...

The 2005-2006 school year begins on August 29. In addition to his teaching responsibilities, Dr. Voss also serves on the Institutional Review Boards of CUW and Columbia St. Mary's Hospital System. He also sits on the ethics committee of Columbia St. Mary's Ozaukee hospital. Watch for Dr. Voss as he appears on Milwaukee Public Television's '4th Street Forum' to discuss the ethics of embryonic stem cell research. The program is scheduled to be aired in the Milwaukee area on October 7 and 8. The program may go statewide. Future issues of *CBI Update* will carry more details.

CBI Needs: Prayer for Kevin Voss and for the work of the CBI; Secretarial help; Necessary office supplies; Bioethics library; *CBI Bioethics Update* video; CBI brochure; Costs for hosting annual bioethics conferences; and Website maintenance. If you would like to help support the mission of the Concordia Center for Bioethics, please contact us. We need your help! Thrivent matching funds are available for donations to the CBI.

Update on Upcoming Events...

September 23, 2005: Pastor David Rakotonirina of the Malagasy Lutheran Church visits the CUW campus.

October 1, 2005: Dr. Voss giving an ethics presentation at the Association of Lutheran College Faculties 2005 Conference near Omaha, Nebraska.

October 2, 2005: Dr. Voss speaks to Circuit Pastors at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Sheboygan, WI.

October 12, 2005: Dr. Voss speaking on stem cell research at St. John's Lutheran Church, West Bend, WI.

October 20-23, 2005: American Society for Bioethics and Humanities Annual Conference, Washington, D.C.

November 11, 2005: LCMS Sanctity of Life Committee, Lutherans for Life, and the CBI co-sponsor a national bioethics conference at the Sheraton Westport Lakeside Chalet, St. Louis, Missouri.

The Concordia Center for Bioethics offers a unique approach to bioethics that equips personal and professional decision making through spiritual guidance, competent teaching, insightful research, and needed resources.