



## Spring 2005 Newsletter

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### Ibis Researchers Challenge Link between Abortion and Anxiety in *Journal of Anxiety Disorders*

Ibis takes seriously the dangers of methodologically flawed research in the heavily politicized world of abortion research. As part of an effort to counter methodologically weak and ideologically-driven papers that manage to enter the peer-reviewed literature, we wrote a letter to the editors of the *Journal of Anxiety Disorders* regarding a paper it recently published that purported to find a causal link between abortion and subsequent experience of anxiety (Cogle, Reardon, and Coleman. Generalized anxiety following unintended pregnancies resolved through childbirth and abortion: a cohort study of the 1995 National Survey of Family Growth. *J Anxiety Dis* 2005;19(1):137-142).

In the letter, we argue that Cogle *et al.* operate with strong political views regarding abortion, and their analysis is not actually adequately designed to show an independent association between abortion and subsequent anxiety. We summarize here some of the main methodological problems with the paper:

- *No mention of competing hypotheses:* Cogle *et al.* do not consider any other events over about a decade of observation that could have given rise to anxiety.
- *Highly flawed construction of the regression model:* First, they selected covariates for their model based on the wrong population. Second, the logistic regression ignores changing covariates with time. Third, they omit predictors that, even from a purely commonsense perspective, should be included. Last, their logistic regression is carried out in an extremely unusual manner.

- *Inappropriate control group:* Cogle *et al.* compare those who became pregnant and delivered with those who became pregnant and chose an abortion. The life circumstances, health, and resources of women in these two groups are not equivalent.
- *Reporting biases and spurious associations:* Women differ in their willingness to report socially stigmatized behavior to interviewers. This leads to a spurious association between any two stigmatized behaviors, since women who are willing to report one are more likely to report the other, if they experienced both.
- *Overstatements of causality based on correlations:* Cogle *et al.*'s analysis cannot distinguish whether anxiety 'caused' the abortions, or the reverse, or neither. The authors fail to fully acknowledge this shortcoming.
- *Conclusions do not reflect research findings:* The authors did not test their hypothesis in a model containing all relevant control variables. Until a more rigorous study design and analysis can be conducted, conclusions suggesting changes in physician practice are inappropriate.

The *Journal's* editors have not responded to our letter, and we do plan a larger dissemination effort. If you would like to see the original article and complete response letter please email [admin@ibisreproductivehealth.org](mailto:admin@ibisreproductivehealth.org).

### Oral Contraceptives Over-The-Counter? Part II

In December 2004, Ibis convened a meeting to review the evidence on the safety of oral contraceptives (OCs). The meeting, held at the Alan Guttmacher Institute and co-hosted by Family Health International (FHI), Gynuity Health Projects, the Harvard Center for Population and Development Studies and The Population Council—Mexico, was the second in a series of meetings planned to examine the issues and coordinate strategies for making OCs available over-the-counter (OTC).

Participants at the December meeting agreed that OCs were safe enough to be used with less medical supervision, although questions about how an OTC OC would affect access and use patterns need to be investigated further. Ibis researchers are planning collaborative research projects to examine the economic implications of an OTC switch for women, physicians and clinics. For more information, please email Kate Schaffer at [kschaffer@ibisreproductivehealth.org](mailto:kschaffer@ibisreproductivehealth.org).

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## Can Diaphragms Protect Women from HIV?

As the Methods for Improving Access to Reproductive Health in Africa (MIRA) trial progresses, we move closer to an answer. MIRA is a randomized controlled trial of the effectiveness of the Ortho All-Flex® diaphragm and Replens® lubricant gel for HIV/STI prevention. The study, a four-organization collaboration led by Dr. Nancy Padian at UCSF and funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, is currently underway in Harare, Zimbabwe and Durban and Johannesburg, South Africa. Enrollment began in Harare in August 2003; Durban in November 2003; and Johannesburg in April 2004. Through the end of January 2005, staff at the 5 enrollment sites in these 3 cities had screened over 6000 women and enrolled nearly 70%, or over 3000, of the required 4500 participants. Enrollment is expected to continue through September 2005, and results will be available in 2007. Sub-studies are currently evaluating the relationship between diaphragm use and Human Papilloma virus (HPV), Bacterial Vaginosis (BV), Herpes Simplex Virus Type II (HSV2), and Pelvic Inflammatory Disease (PID). Another sub-study is evaluating the educational materials used for the trial. The MIRA team is also collaborating on social science and policy components of the trial. Work on these components continues alongside the daily progress of the MIRA trial. [Click here for a new MIRA fact sheet.](#)



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## New Diaphragm Bibliography

Ibis Reproductive Health and the Cervical Barrier Advancement Society (CBAS) are happy to announce a new bibliography of recent articles on the diaphragm. Ibis used the annotated bibliography from the 2002 Diaphragm Renaissance conference as a starting point and added to the list of recent, relevant published literature on the diaphragm. The bibliography contains a list of citations in alphabetical order hyperlinked to an expanded list of citations including abstracts, following the format of the Diaphragm Renaissance bibliography. The bibliography and electronic versions of all cited references are available on the [CBAS website](#) or by [emailing CBAS](#).

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## Ibis Staff News

Ibis would like to welcome Emily Shortridge who has joined the staff as a Research Associate. Emily is also a Doctoral Candidate in Department of Health Policy at the Harvard University Graduate School of Arts and Sciences with a concentration in Medical Sociology.

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## New Resources

- **Abortion Funding: A Matter of Justice (NNAF)**

The National Network of Abortion Funds (NNAF) will soon release a new report entitled *Abortion Funding: A Matter of Justice*. The report provides a unique window into the problem of abortion access by describing women's experiences from the perspective of grassroots abortion funds that help women who cannot afford to pay for an abortion. The funds profiled include city and statewide funds in states that deny women Medicaid funding for abortions; a fund that raises money for women all over the country; a regional fund that helps women from several states who do not qualify for Medicaid or whose insurance excludes abortion; and also a fund that provides practical support with transportation, housing, and meals to women traveling long distances to reach a provider.

The report identifies serious consequences for women who cannot get public funding, including delays that push women into later and more costly abortions. The report also demonstrates that even with the dedication of volunteers who raised two million dollars to help almost 20,000 women in fiscal year 2003, grassroots groups can never help all of the women negatively affected by government funding bans. Shawn Towey and Stephanie Poggi of NNAF and Rachel Roth of Ibis wrote the report, with assistance from Jillian Henderson of the Center for Reproductive Health Policy and Research at UCSF. The report will be available at the NNAF and Ibis web sites soon.

- **Defending Justice: An Activist Resource Kit**

Political Research Associates will soon release *Defending Justice: An Activist Resource Kit* about prisons and the criminal justice system in the United States. The web site features fact sheets and additional materials not included in the print version. Rachel Roth of Ibis worked with lead editor Palak Shah on a chapter about women and reproductive rights, examining the history of reproductive politics and the increasing role of criminal justice agencies and prisons as institutions of social control. The chapter emphasizes the punitive treatment of low-income women and women of color by government and private organizations.

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## Recent Ibis Staff Publications

- Price K. **The Discursive Politics of Reproductive Health.** *Anthropology News*. February 2005.
- Miller K. **Assisted reproduction may change birth intentions.** *Fertility and Sterility*. Vol. 81, No.3, March 2004. 572-581.

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## Upcoming Events

### Population Association of America 2005 Annual Meeting

**March 31- April 2, 2005: Philadelphia, PA**

PAA members include demographers, sociologists, economists, public health professionals, and other individuals interested in research and education in the population field. The PAA Annual Meeting provides a forum for the presentation of scientific papers, workshops, discussion groups and job opportunities.

### From Abortion Rights to Social Justice: Building the Movement for Reproductive Freedom

**April 1-3, 2005: Amherst, MA**

For 18 years, people have gathered over this weekend at Hampshire College to unite and rally for reproductive justice. Conference speakers address reproductive freedom as it relates to a broad range of social justice initiatives including economic justice, healthcare reform, racial equality, peace, freedom from violence, youth liberation, civil liberties, and LGBTQ rights.

### Feminism and Hip Hop

**April 7-9, 2005: Chicago, IL**

A conference exploring the impact of Hip Hop on the sexual, gender, and racial consciousness of a generation. Ibis Fellow Kimala Price will present a paper on political organizing for reproductive justice on a panel sponsored by the Progressive Women's Caucus of the National Hip Hop Political Convention on electoral politics and grass-roots organizing.

### National AIDS Update Conference

**April 10-13, 2005: Oakland, CA**

Attracts health care professionals, service providers, community advocates, and people living with HIV/AIDS. It presents the latest information on critical prevention, treatment, and care issues, aiming to translate research advances into practical strategies to help end the AIDS pandemic and improve the lives of people living with HIV/AIDS.

### Hormonal Contraception and HIV Transmission

**May 4–May 6, 2005: New York, NY**

*(This is an invite-only event.)*

A meeting on the possible links between hormonal contraception use and increased HIV transmission, mechanisms, and implications.

### Global Health Council Conference

**May 31-June 3, 2005: Washington DC**

What does it take to make these systems actually deliver the public goods on which billions of humans rely, to make "Health for All" more than a slogan? What are the key enablers, and the major constraints, to effective programs? What can be done to address these issues from the outside, and how can the needed internal capacities be built and strengthened to make programmatic gains sustainable by those whose stake is the greatest?



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## March is *Back Up Your Birth Control Month!*

*Back Up Your Birth Control* is a campaign to help make emergency contraception (EC) more effective by making sure women know about it – and can get it in time. To make this campaign a success, we need you! Get involved with one of the activities suggested below or [visit the BUYBC website](#).

- **Encourage your local pharmacy to stock EC** – send thank you letters to those who do and let those that don't know that they'll lose your business.
  - **Contact your local pharmacy board or pharmacy association** and let them know you support educating pharmacists and consumers about EC.
  - **Conduct a pharmacy survey** to learn about demand for EC and pharmacist attitudes about EC in your community or your state.
  - **Create a resource guide** for your community, listing area pharmacies that stock EC.
  - **Tell your friends about EC** and suggest they help spread the word about it.
  - **Post information on your website** about emergency contraception (EC). [Create a link to this campaign](#).
  - **Send an e-card** to spread the word that the FDA denial of over-the-counter Plan B (EC) is medically unjustified and smacks of political interference in scientific decisions.
  - **E-mail the FDA** and urge them to listen to the medical experts and scientific evidence--and approve over-the-counter Plan B.
  - **E-mail President Bush** and tell him that scientific evidence, not politics, should guide the FDA's decision on making Plan B over-the-counter.
  - **Sign up** for the EC [Email Alert](#).
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