

CONTRACEPTIVES OF THE FUTURE

A Discussion held on 18 and 19 February 1976

Organized by R. V. Short, F.R.S. and D. T. Baird

A review of the natural constraints on human fertility shows that these mechanisms can no longer be expected to hold human population growth in check in the future ; as a species we are therefore going to become increasingly dependent on artificial forms of contraception for the rest of our existence. Much of the contraceptive research in recent years has been aimed at improving the efficiency of existing techniques, which are already highly sophisticated and designed mainly with the developed countries in mind ; but the major problems lie in the developing countries where the needs are greatest and the motivation least. More attention must therefore be given to the acceptability of contraceptives, and the development of non-medical channels for their distribution and sale.

Although the techniques at present available seem to be relatively safe and effective, there are still a number of unexplored approaches that can be developed in the years to come. Immunization of women against pregnancy seems to hold some promise, and forms of contraception that result in amenorrhoea may also prove increasingly acceptable. Unfortunately there are few promising leads in the direction of male sterilization.

Contributors to this report were experts from the Medical Research Council, the World Health Organization, the Ford Foundation, the Population Council and voluntary family planning organizations.

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