

Friday, April 6, 1990

Study: Most abortions not stressful

Researchers find no evidence of long-term psychological threats

WASHINGTON (AP) — Legal, voluntary abortion in the first trimester of pregnancy does not threaten most women's mental health or cause them great emotional distress, according to a new study.

Though some women may feel regret, sadness or guilt, "the weight of the evidence from scientific studies indicates that legal abortion of an unwanted pregnancy in the first trimester does not pose a psychological hazard for most women," said the study, to be published Friday in the journal *Science*.

Olivia Gans, director of American Victims of Abortion, called the study "a manipulation" of data from earlier studies.

"When you look at these studies, you can twist them any way you need to to get whatever conclusion you want," she said.

The new study was commissioned by the American Psychological Association, which asked

experts to examine all current research and determine if a valid conclusion could be drawn about post-abortion psychological effects.

Nancy E. Adler, a University of California-San Francisco professor of psychiatry and lead author of the report, said the panel surveyed more than 200 studies and found only "about 19 or 20" that met solid scientific standards.

Once those studies were examined, she said, the conclusion "was really quite clear."

The APA convened the panel in 1988 after then-Surgeon General C. Everett Koop reported that studies were inadequate to draw final conclusions about the effects of abortion on women's mental health.

In the *Science* report, the authors said case studies have shown that some women do experience "severe distress ... after abortion and require sympathetic care."

But for the vast majority of women who have

voluntary abortions, "severe negative reactions are infrequent in the immediate and short-term aftermath," the study said.

The greatest distress, the study found, "is likely to be before the abortion."

"Severe negative reactions after abortions are rare and can best be understood in the framework of coping with a normal life stress," the study said.

"I feel comfortable about the conclusion that there is little psychological hazard for women," Adler said in a telephone interview. But she noted that there is a need for scientific studies that would compare the effects of abortion with that of other stressful events in life.

Adler said studies of the psychological effects of a death have shown that if there is no negative mental health response within a few months, there is little chance that one will develop later.

Singer, senator express hope for AIDS victim

KOKOMO, Ind. (AP) — Residents of AIDS patient Ryan White's old hometown, many of whom fought to keep the teenager out of their schools, expressed hope Wednesday that he'd win his latest battle — this one for his life.

"I hope he gets better and is able to do something in life," said Brian Correll, 22, a student at Indiana University's Kokomo campus. "I hope he can enjoy life a little more."

White, 18, remained in critical condition at Riley Hospital for Children in Indianapolis, where he has been hospitalized since March 29 with an AIDS-related respiratory infection complicated by his hemophilia.

Singer Elton John spent his second full day at White's room, playing tapes of his music, family spokeswoman Carrie Van Dyke said.

"He's strictly here as a friend," Van Dyke said. "He goes in and talks to Ryan, holds his hand and changes his music."

Also Wednesday, a U.S. Senate committee voted unanimously for a bill aimed at easing the nation's AIDS crisis.

"This one's for you, Ryan," Sen. Edward M. Kennedy, D-Mass., said in a telephone conversation with White's mother, Jeanne, after the Labor and Human Resources Committee approved the Comprehensive AIDS Resources Emergency Act. The bill, which has bipartisan support, would provide an additional \$600 million a year for two years to combat acquired immune deficiency syndrome.

White's physician, Dr. Martin B. Kleiman, said there was still cause for hope.

"He's holding on," Kleiman said. "His status deteriorated in the first day or two and then reached a plateau. Any patient who is critical must stabilize before he can recover and Ryan has stabilized."

White is on a life-support system. He has been unconscious and heavily sedated so the equipment would function more efficiently.

Parliament declares democracy, works for German reunification

EAST BERLIN (AP) — East Germany's first freely chosen Parliament declared the nation a democracy on Thursday and began building a political system that will lead it to unification with West Germany.

The lawmakers, elected March 18 in the nation's first democratic ballot, convened for the first time and formally dismantled the Communist system that ruled four decades.

Meeting in the Palace of the Republic built by the former Stalinist regime, the 400-member Parliament began rewriting the constitution to mirror that of West Germany.

The new legislature and the government it creates could be East Germany's last as a sovereign state because of the moves toward unification with West Germany.

The Parliament empowered Christian Democrat leader Lothar

de Maiziere, whose party holds the most seats in Parliament, to build a new government from the 11 parties represented in the legislature.

Dr. Sabine Bergmann-Pohl, a Christian Democrat, was elected president of Parliament and urged that lawmakers "do justice to our responsibilities and that we soon sit in a common German Parliament."

Bergmann-Pohl said legislators must work with their West German counterparts to merge the nations and bring the capital of a single Germany back to a united Berlin.

The gathering was rich in symbolism and was the culmination of the revolt that toppled the former Communist regime in October. But the shape of de Maiziere's government and the pace of reunification will likely be worked out in backroom negotiations.

"Forty years of difficult times

have ended in this moment," said Lothar Piche, 63, the oldest member of Parliament. "God support our German fatherland."

The first thing the 390 lawmakers in attendance did was elect Bergmann-Pohl to be Parliament's president.

Others seeking the post were outgoing Communist Premier Hans Modrow, who leads a rebuilt pro-democracy party that finished a distant third in the March elections. He finished third in the voting for Parliament president, behind Social Democrat Reinhard Hoepfner.

The Parliament also created an office of president to be a ceremonial head of state and abolished the old Communist collective body, the Council of State.

Bergmann-Pohl will serve as head of state until a president is elected by Parliament.

Phillips reformulates gas in effort to make environmentally sound fuel

ST. LOUIS (AP) — Phillips Petroleum Co. on Thursday became the latest oil company to introduce a reformulated gasoline designed to be less harmful to the environment than existing grades.

Phillips' reformulated fuel — blended to reduce certain hydrocarbon emissions — will be tested in St. Louis, one of more than 100 cities that fall below the Environmental Protection Agency's minimum standards for air quality.

Charles Bowerman, a Phillips senior vice president, said the mid-grade gasoline, SuperClean Unleaded Plus, contains 20 to 30 percent less olefins and aromatics and 35 percent less benzene than the average gasoline sold in the St. Louis area. The company did not make a comparison with the average gasoline sold nationally.

The rush by America's oil companies to make gasoline less toxic comes in response to stepped-up government efforts to reduce air emissions from the tailpipes of cars and trucks.

George Gaspar, a stock analyst for Robert W. Baird & Co. in Milwaukee, said oil companies are trying to protect their markets by developing "cleaner" gasoline that will help auto companies meet tougher air emission standards.

"If the auto companies don't get any help they may have to take some major actions that could hurt the petroleum industry," said Gaspar. "We're going to hear a lot about how great reformulated gasoline is."

The new gasoline is made by removing the more toxic compounds and replacing them with methyl-tertiary-butyl-ether, a blending component with a high oxygen content.

Other oil companies that have introduced reformulated gasolines include Arco, Marathon, Exxon, Amoco, Mobil, Cigo and Sun Oil.

While the new gasolines are slightly better for the environment, they're only a small step in attempts to end smog and other pollution in America's cities, said Scott

"They're missing the forest for the trees. These new gasolines are a little more benign on the environment, but they are not the best way for us to reduce pollution."

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The Safe Energy Communication Council, based in Washington, is a national coalition of environmental groups working to promote alternate energy sources and better use of current ones.

Drug treatment helps fight illness

NEW YORK (AP) — Each night Shirley Dawson went to bed, unsure if this would be the night the rare disease that had crippled her sons' immune systems would take their lives.

"I was on guard 24 hours a day," she says. "If they would even cough at night, I would jump up. It was fear. We were always living in fear."

The boys — Dwayne, 15, and Leroy Jr., 12 — are victims of severe combined immunodeficiency disease, better known as "boy in the bubble" disease after a SCID child who survived by living in a sterile plastic bubble.

Only 40 SCID children survive around the world. Thirteen of them live in the United States; two of them live in the South Bronx, in the Dawson household.

But thanks to a new drug treatment that essentially replaces a missing enzyme needed to fight common infections, the Dawsons sleep easier, the years of worry relegated to painful memories.

The boys' early years were marked by infections of every kind. They received weekly blood transfusions and were stuck five, six, seven times with needles. The prospect of each hospital visit made them sick.

They went to school, but were out more than they were in.

Researchers create enzyme that fights rare SCID disease

"Every night I went to bed not knowing — would I find them alive the next morning," Mrs. Dawson recalls. The emotional toll was enormous.

"I felt trapped," she said. "I couldn't go anywhere. I couldn't dare think of a family vacation, which was sorely needed."

Her husband, Leroy Sr., remembers working all day and spending all night at the hospital, watching his children grow amid IV tubes, oxygen lines and monitors.

"It was rough; trying to hold a job, worrying about the kids at the same time," says Dawson, an electrician.

Dwayne was diagnosed as having the disease when he was 18 months old. "He always had fevers, infections, they would just never go away," Mrs. Dawson said. "I knew something was terribly wrong."

Dwayne once spent nearly 10 months in isolation at a hospital. He was released a week before Leroy Jr. was born, and lightning — in the form of SCID — struck twice.

The Dawsons were prepared. Amniocentesis, a prenatal genetics

test, had revealed the worst.

When the test results came back, in Dawson's fifth month of pregnancy, "I thought I was gonna die. I could have, you know, terminated it. But I didn't want that. I felt we would just deal with it," she said.

For nine years, they did. But then Enzon Inc., a small, South Plainfield, N.J.-based biopharmaceutical company, developed what its president jokingly refers to as "our hairy enzyme."

Researchers believe SCID is caused by a lack of adenosine deaminase, or ADA, an enzyme needed to stave off infection. The enzyme is killed out of SCID patients in about a half hour.

The treatment developed by Enzon, PEG-ADA, is basically an enzyme with a hair-like protein attached which allows it to stay in the bloodstream for up to a week.

PEG-ADA, used experimentally since 1985, was approved by the Food and Drug Administration on March 23. There are no known side effects to the treatment, which costs about \$60,000 yearly. The Dawsons

long ago exhausted their insurance, and Medicaid is paying for the boys' treatments.

PEG-ADA was developed with a \$160,000 grant from the federal "orphan" drug program, which encourages companies to research diseases afflicting fewer than 200,000 patients.

Most SCID patients don't live in circumstances as extreme as the boy in the bubble, but no one would argue that theirs is not a lonely, isolated existence. Their immune systems cannot fight infections as common as pneumonia and chicken pox; most have died before they turned 2.

To date, the only cure was bone-marrow transplants. Those who could not find a suitable match had to be isolated from the public to avoid germs.

Abbey Myers, executive director of the National Organization for Rare Disorders, applauds Enzon for researching this disease that affects so few.

"These children can look forward to happy and healthy lives now because Enzon took a risk," Myers says.

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