

The Media's Sensationalism of Abortion

In the name of public service, local media practitioners in the Philippines have established names for themselves in delivering exposés bringing various issues and events to full public scrutiny through police accompanied raids and bust operations.

With the advent of smaller and mobile technology, many of these bust operations have also taken on the mode of hidden surveillance, with the media directing the police to sting operations they arranged themselves. No doubt, the public's right to know is touted in many, if not all such cases of media excursions.

Unfortunately, in local politics, technology, surveillance and even the media's act of publicly exposing wrongdoing has proven insufficient in the face of scandals involving corrupt public officials, or massive cheating in the national elections.

On the other hand, for cases of abortion, whether individual women resorting to clandestine abortions or clinics suspected of conducting them, media bust operations have always served a very clear purpose: keeping the issue of abortion in its place—that is, the place it has long occupied in the public discourse: crime/sin/sexual immorality.

Last Saturday, a local news feature program aired side-by-side separate raids of a drug colony, child sex trafficking and a traditional birth attendant accused of instructing a pregnant woman to take

Like past raids, and coverage of such raids, the media went through the usual motions of hidden camera angles, barging into the alleged clinic and including shots of the police waving around the illicit matter. In this case, tablets of Misoprostol, medicine for gastric ulcers, which while legally available in the past have been withdrawn from registration in the Philippines since 2002.

Confronted with her misdeed, the sixty-year old birth attendant and councilor, Corazon Matic offered her only defense: I wanted to help, I couldn't refuse them (referring to pregnant women who approached her for help with unwanted pregnancy). She was later charged for dispensing an unregistered drug.

As concerned as they are about crime and punishment, or even the public's right to know, often the purpose of media and police raids on suspected abortion clinics has little to do with actually preventing clandestine abortions, or even informing the public about how Misoprostol works, why it is very popular locally and how it is different from hormonal contraception. After all, in the local public discourse, abortion remains shrouded in myth, despite available empirical data. For this reason, raids and abortions remain staples of sensational media alongside prostitution and drugs.

Elsewhere of course, the protocol for medication abortion is

However, the celebrated abortion pill is not widely available. (Misoprostol is also used either with Mifepristone or Methotrexate in combination.)

Off-label use of Cytotec (the brand name for Misoprostol, developed by Searle) for medication abortion has been documented in the Philippines since the late eighties, when Cytotec was still widely available as a prescription drug for gastric ulcers. Making its way into the black market, Cytotec also reportedly became widely available in Quiapo, Manila, where stalls plying all sorts of herbal medicine—including local concoctions called pamparegla (literally to induce or regulate menstruation)—were strategically located just outside the Quiapo Catholic church.

In 1994, the Department of Health issued a Memorandum order regarding the off-label use of Misoprostol, and by 2002 it was totally withdrawn from the market by Searle.

Yet it is not surprising that the drug remains locally available, given the local situation. Despite its illegal status in the Philippines since the Spanish occupation (the current penal code is adopted from the 1897 *Kodigo penal*), the Guttmacher Institute estimated in its 2006 published study that 473,000 abortions occur annually in the country. This means that one third of women who experience an unintended pregnancy, resort to abortion.

Womenlead's Executive Director, Attorney Claire Angeline P. Luczon, raised her concern about the manner in which media approaches the issue of abortion:

It is unfortunate that with all the influence accorded it today, media is unable to deliver the most important facts when it comes to abortion. Studies have shown that it is usually poor mothers who already have three or more children who resort to abortion, yet we never hear media reporting about these women's lack of options or why they were not able to prevent the pregnancies in the first place.

Since it was founded in 2000, Womenlead has also given legal assistance to a number of health practitioners and clinics targeted by similar media-led exposés.

Yet in 2005, media also fed the frenzied threats of a pro-life mayor in Manila, giving him live TV coverage as he threatened to have an NGO (nongovernmental organization) run clinic shut down and its staff arrested by Manila police, for providing

Indeed, in having framed abortion so narrowly, the media has also unwittingly served the cause of misinformation. The former mayor equates all manner of contraception with abortifacients (yes, even the condom).

In 2003, Womenlead filed a case to re-register Postinor, an emergency contraceptive pill which was registered in 1999 and promoted by the Department of Health for use in rape crisis centers. The same argument (classifying it as

In 2005, the Experts Committee formed by the DOH upheld our petition, accepting our legal and scientific arguments, but by that time, the original registration applicant had already backed out and expressed no further interest in taking the application again, recalls Luczon.

The Secretary of the Department of Health set aside the petition, caving in to political pressure and refusing to make a ruling as to the substantive recommendation by the Experts Committee.

Indeed, local sensational accounts have proven strategic for conservatives, serving to blur the lines between contraception and abortion, while also taking away the focus from the women who take untold risks and now face even fewer options.

ALL forms of the pill, potent steroids that are every bit as dangerous as androgenic steroids used by athletes illegally, are a health hazard and dangerous to women's health.

While I don't claim to have had the benefit of over 30 years of experience in pharmacology as the good DR. here, I as well as many women I know have used the pill and lived through it. :-). Many of us had children when we felt ready and can only hope other women who wish to make the same choices, aided by modern medicine, are able to, that is only if they want to. Of course they ought to be able to, with the best medical advice available. I hardly think this type of concern can be considered PR and selfishness. Access to

Just so we are clear on this though, Vioxx was a pain reliever pulled off the shelves in the US in 2004, as I understand it, for good reason. I am not sure how to respond to misuse of steroids by athletes because I don't remember writing about that but any misuse I suppose would entail hazards to health.

When I refer to contraceptives of course I mean the hormonal birth control pills and ECP here in this case, levonorgestrel (Postinor in particular). Of course we want women to know that in making use of any medicine, it is important to go through screening. This is why access to correct information is very important for everyone.

It is pretty obvious the good DR. here equates all manner of contraception with abortion (abortifacients) (and even a handful of other drugs)---and maybe it would suffice to reply that my personal beliefs (as well as many others) don't align with such a position. It might surprise you to discover that I

respect your position and that given your position (even as I know you do not respect mine).

I suspect you may only consider natural family planning or even abstinence as your only morally acceptable choices. By all means, you are free to practice this belief but not to impose them upon others. I hope you are able to accord those of us who disagree with you enough respect to consider that ours is also a position of good faith. Thank you.

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ALL forms of the pill, potent steroids that are every bit as dangerous as androgenic steroids used by athletes illegally, are a health hazard and dangerous to women's health.

Seems you are more concerned on PR and selfishness rather than what these powerful steroids do to women, killing and harming many of them and killing millions of preborns yearly all around the world.

As a long time pharmacist with a doctorate in this area of science and 30 years experience, it is unconscionable that a health professional would give such potent abortifacient steroids to otherwise healthy women. Vioxx cannot be concluded to have killed anyone and the FDA yanked it. The sacred cow of "contraception" unfortunately does not get similar attention. Thank God the Philippines have enough sense to ban Cytotec,

While not everyone has gotten the hang of posting their comments on-line, I'm taking the liberty to respond to one I got from our dear and respected feminist leader and former Board of Trustees member, Dr. Junice D. Melgar: dear carol, congrats on the continued critique of the antiRR media. just a minor clarification: it was not just womenlead who filed a case to lift the ban on postinor. kasama din ang maraming (it also included a lot of other) RHAN orgs. Dr. Junice is of course correct. Womenlead legally represented the

Advocacy Network (RHAN) in this case and led the writing of legal memo but was only constrained to file as petitioner when the issue of legal and corporate personality was raised several times before the Experts Committee. RHAN then was a coalition of around 22 organizations working in the advocacy on Reproductive Health. Now we are happy to note that its membership is around 45+ (and growing). RHAN membership also led in the advocacy and mobilization on the issue of ECP it has also since been taken on by more

Advocates for Pregnant Women AIDS and Rights AIDS Combat Zone aidsmatters.org Ask Dr. K (sexual health advice) Bag News Notes BCadviser Belly Tales Bitch PhD blogger: health wellness Blogs by Women Bush v. Choice CDC Chatter ChoiceLinkUp.com Citizen Brand Creative Loafing Culture Kitchen Daily Kos Daou Report Democratic Underground Donkey O.D. Echidne of the Snakes Fact-esque Feministe Feministing The Feminist Pulse(from Girlistic.com) Fundie Watch Global Voices Gloria Feldt Is America Burning? itslateagain Majikthise MedBlog with Leigh Hopper Media Girl Moms Rising Muckraking Mom National Abortion Federation Blog: Saporta Reporter National Network of Abortion Funds New Moon OneWorld Our Bodies, Our Blog Our Descent Into Madness Pandagon

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Burying Release of Abstinence Only Report on Friday the 13th Seems Fitting
Top 10 Reasons Why You Should Be Terrified that Dr. Eric Keroack is in Charge of the U.S. Federal Family Planning Program
Public Health Being Gagged, Hog-tied and Tossed in a Trunk
Brownback Rapes Body Politic
When Abstinence Only Policies Fail, Bring In The Hatchet Men to Preserve Bush s Billion Dollar Boondoggle
Missing the Point, and Failing on Human Trafficking
Who Can Claim Life as a Culture?
Using Religion Against Contraception: Part 1

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Tobias Latest Evidence of Bush Hypocrisy
Moving Backwards for Nicaraguan Women
Anti-Contraception Activists You Should Know
When Abstinence Only Policies Fail, Bring In The Hatchet Men to Preserve Bush s Billion Dollar Boondoggle
Interview with Jennifer Block, Author of Pushed Sent Away: A New Look at Maternity Group Homes
Beyond Shame: Democrats Sell Out Youth

About the Author

From www.rhrealitycheck.org:

There have been some great informational pages already written by many individuals that address the concept of herbal contraception and herbal. While silphium was considered to be the most effective herbal contraceptive of the classical world, not everyone could afford it and there were always. List of the best Herbal Contraception, Herbal Contraception , and Herbal Contraception.

An alternative method of birth control that is not as effective as medical methods include herbal contraception and implantation.

Definition of Herbal contraception in the Medical Dictionary. Herbal contraception explanation. Information about Herbal contraception.

Generally, natural birth control does not involve hormonal contraception. Sister Zeus, information on herbal contraception, fertility.

At this time, herbal methods of contraception are not widely used or. There is a strong desire for more information in the realm of herbal.

Discussion of herbs that have been used through history to prevent conception, with modern observations.

Source: <http://www.productsherbal.com>