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Study finds free birth control cuts abortion numbers

Thomas C. Fox | Oct. 6, 2012 NCR Today

Free birth control led to dramatically lower rates of abortions and teen births, a large study [1] has concluded.

The research project [2] tracked more than 9,000 women in St. Louis, many of them poor or uninsured. They were given their choice of a range of contraceptive methods at no cost

According to the study, the effect on teen pregnancy was striking: There were 6.3 births per 1,000 teenagers in the study compared to a national rate of 34 births per 1,000 teens in 2010.

There also were substantially lower rates of abortion when compared with women in the metro area and nationally: 4.4 to 7.5 abortions per 1,000 women in the study, compared with 13.4 to 17 abortions per 1,000 women overall.

The results of the study bolster unsettling - and long held claims - that Catholic church teachings on human sexuality, with its emphasis on the absolute immorality of artificial contraception, have led, in certain circumstances, to an increase, not a decrease, in abortion rates.

It is only in some Platonic universe, which no people I know populate, that all forms of artificial contraception are the immoral equivalent of abortion. Yet this is the world in which official Catholic teachings rest. It is fair and necessary to ask if official Catholic teachings are somehow causing unwarranted abortions.

The findings also come in the midst of an election campaign in which Catholic bishops have bitterly attacked Obama administration healthcare policy that provides free access to birth control.

I will be eager to hear reports about how our bishops react to these findings. At a minimum the new study indicates that life, and sexual issues, as faced by men and women, are often complex, and choices are often not black and white.

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[1] http://www.sfgate.com/health/article/Study-Free-birth-control-cuts-abortion-3924284.php
[2] http://journals.lww.com/greenjournal/Abstract/publishahead/Preventing_Unintended_Pregnancies_by_Providing.99945.