

Dear members of the Notre Dame Board of Trustees:

In April, the Notre Dame chapter of University Faculty for Life sponsored an on-campus lecture by Dr. Monique Chireau Wubbenhorst, an MD and Professor of Obstetrics and Gynecology at the Duke University Medical Center. Her topic was "Contraceptive Technology: Simple, Complex, Complicated?"

The first part of her lecture is relevant to the University's desire to exclude abortion-inducing drugs from its new contraceptives coverage. She explained that it is difficult for medical researchers to determine how often standard hormonal contraceptives induce abortions, because of researchers' inability to measure the rate of "escape ovulation" (i.e., failures of contraceptives to prevent ovulation). Contraceptives on the market today may allow escape ovulation to occur more often because they contain lower doses of estrogen (slides 28, 31). Escape ovulation can also occur when the patient misses doses or even fails to take a dose at the same time each day (slide 31).

If escape ovulation occurs and the egg is fertilized, the resulting human embryo may be killed by the hostile conditions that the contraceptives create in the mother's body. Dr. Chireau Wubbenhorst identified two such hostile conditions: low progesterone levels which starve the embryo of critical hormonal support (slide 35) and decreased endometrial receptivity which prevents the embryo from implanting in the uterus (slide 38).

In his statement explaining his decision to have the University cover contraceptives, Fr. Jenkins stated that Notre Dame would not cover abortion-inducing drugs. Indeed, his stated reason for shifting to a Notre Dame-administered plan was to end the University's entanglement with abortion-inducing drugs. We do not understand how Notre Dame could cover hormonal contraceptives and still claim that it has cleanly ended its entanglement with abortion-inducing drugs, given the scientifically grounded concerns that hormonal contraceptives are abortion-inducing (potentially at a rate much higher than what the limited research conveys).

Dr. Chireau Wubbenhorst then went on to discuss the historical, moral, and theological aspects of contraception. We call particular attention to slide 42, where Dr. Chireau Wubbenhorst, a Protestant, notes that contraception is not just a "Catholic issue" but part of longstanding Christian tradition and teaching. We also draw your attention to slides 49-54, where she describes the corrosive "contraceptive mentality" which Notre Dame will be promoting with the adoption of the contraceptive plans.

Please take some time to review her lecture slides and ask yourself if it is wise for Notre Dame to go down this path. Beyond the contraceptives plan itself, it is disturbing that contraceptives will be distributed at the Wellness Center on campus, and that there have been no announced conscience protection policies for the Center's healthcare providers and pharmacists who may wish not to be involved in contraception consultations or prescriptions.

There is still time to reverse the present course. We strongly urge you to return Notre Dame to the health insurance programs of just four years ago, which were in line with Catholic teaching on critically important moral issues.

Yours In Notre Dame,

[Selected current and former board members of University Faculty for Life, Notre Dame Chapter]



