

BEWARE OF QUINACRINE

Quinacrine, a drug originally used to treat malaria is being used for non-surgical female sterilisation. When inserted in the vagina in pellet form the drug acts as a sterilising agent, it is easily manufactured and low-cost. The Centre for Research on Population and Security has

been supplying Quinacrine pellets at no cost to researchers and government health agencies, field trials have also been reported in India. However, large scale clinical trials have not been done and the safety and efficacy of the drug remains to be established.

According to an article in the medical journal *Lancet*, the side effects include severe bleeding and pain, toxicity and the risk of ectopic pregnancy, failure rates have also been reported.

Quinacrine pellets have not yet proven to be a safe and effective non-surgical method of female sterilisation.

Source: The NGO Planning Committee for the ICPD, 777 UN Plaza, 8th Floor, New York 10017 USA, September, 1994.

T HAZARDS L C

A study was undertaken in July 1992 aimed at determining whether common talc contributes to the risk of ovarian cancer. Talc was suspected because its chemical makeup is similar to that of asbestos. A group of 235 women with diagnosed ovarian cancer was compared to a control group of 239 women. All were asked about talc exposure through dusting of underwear, sanitary towels and diaphragms (for storage); exposure due to male partners' use of talc; and

exposure through the use of talcum powder directly on the genitals. Results revealed women who applied talc daily to their perineal area for more than ten years were at 60% greater risk for ovarian cancer. Users with thirty years exposure raised the risk to 80%. Talc products used before 1970 gave greater risk because of their increased use of asbestiform content, which seems to have decreased since 1976.

Source: *Consumer Currents*, September/October 1994.