

# More young women choosing health over birth control

By Kerri Lenartowic Rome, Italy, Apr 8, 2014 (CNA/EWTN News)

Brianna Heldt was 20 years-old when she first started taking the birth control pill. As an Evangelical Protestant, she believed in saving sex for marriage, but the young college student was planning her wedding and wanted to delay having children for a few years.

Like many young women, Heldt visited her college's campus health clinic and got a prescription.

What followed was an unexpected and "horribly difficult" time for Heldt and her husband.

"From the time I began taking it I had severe headaches," she recounted. "I was constantly bloated and hungry, and worst of all, I became an emotional wreck. Things that would never have bothered me before made me cry uncontrollably. Kevin (my husband) and I had always gotten along so well but we began arguing, and I was perpetually frustrated with him."

"Intercourse was painful," she added. "I even saw an OB/GYN about this problem who never once connected those dots for me, and just tried to tell me that it was some sort of psychological problem. But it was not."

It turns out that Heldt's experience was not unique. This January, 90s talk show host Ricki Lake opted to make a documentary exploring the dangers of hormonal contraceptives.

Based on Holly Grigg-Spall's book, "Sweetening The Pill: or How We Became Hooked On Hormonal Birth Control," the full-length film will consider the dangers of the birth control pill, as well as other contraceptives such as Yaz and Nuvaring.

"In the 50 years since its release, the pill has become synonymous with women's liberation and has been thought of as some sort of miracle drug," said Lake and her co-producer, Abby Epstein. "But now it's making women sick and so our goal with this film is to wake women up to the unexposed side effects of these powerful medications and the unforeseen consequences of repressing women's natural cycles."

Perhaps Lake's forthcoming documentary will not only "wake women up" but speak for those who have experienced some of the negative side effects of hormonal contraception.

Mara Kofoed – who writes the popular blog, "A Blog About Love," with her husband Danny – recently wrote a post confessing her loathing of the birth control pill.

"You guys, I hate the birth control pill. I mean, I really, really hate it. I know it's 'supposed' to be liberating to women, but I am convinced this pill is actually harming a lot of women – and therefore society at large including marriages, relationships, friendships, families, and work places," she wrote on Feb. 26.

The Kofoeds are professed Mormons who have no moral objection to the hormonal contraceptives. Instead, Mara listed a series of side effects she had experienced, including physical symptoms such as "severe, acute pains in my heart," as well as more general ones like a "lack of intuition & creativity," and "numbed spirituality."

Although the responses to Mara's post were mixed, many women shared similar experiences, and one commenter noted her desire to avoid ingesting a substance classified as a group 1 carcinogenic by the World Health Organization, the "same group as asbestos."

Heldt said the many side effects of the pill were reason enough to quit. "I had begun taking the pill a few months before our wedding to make sure it was working properly by the time I needed it. And only a couple of months after our wedding, I threw the prescription into the trash."

"I decided I'd rather be a sane, healthy mother than a miserable, insane woman without children. I wasn't sure what we'd use going forward but I knew I couldn't continue with the pill."

As many women begin to share a desire to avoid hormonal contraceptives, this growing trend has led to a rise in new technologies for "natural" methods of dealing with fertility, both in avoiding and achieving pregnancy.

William and Katherine Sacks, husband and wife co-founders of the new iPhone app, Kindara, recently told Business Insider, "we founded the company because we were looking for effective birth control that wasn't the pill."

"Kati had been on the pill for 10 years and she didn't like the side effects. She introduced me to the fertility awareness method and I was blown away by how little I understood about female fertility," William Sacks explained.

For those who do want to have a baby, Kindara now boasts that it has helped 10,000 women conceive.

The Kindara app is one among many of the latest technologies in offering women an opportunity to know their own fertility.

MyFertilityMD and MyFertilityCycle.com claim to be "tools designed for women by doctors and researchers. At the apex of research and technology stands an organic way for women to reclaim their fertility without birth control or dangerous hormones."

Other app options such as My Fertility Friend and Glow offer "advanced ovulation charts" and "fertility predictors."

Many years later, Heldt and her husband are the parents of eight children through biology and adoption, noting that becoming parents has "changed our lives in the most beautiful and profound ways."

Heldt says that now although she knows her cycle, they "don't use any sort of formal fertility tracking." She's glad that more women are now talking about the problems with hormonal contraceptives.

"I've met many ladies who've had negative experiences with the pill just like me, but even if their personal experience wasn't bad, there is a tension there for sure. Many women sense that there's a problem with the fact that fertility is treated like a disease to be managed."

"Some are concerned that the pill allows women to be used by men. And we should all be alarmed by the physical dangers inherent in using hormonal contraception, especially over a long period of years – an increased risk of blood clots, stroke, and certain types of cancer."

"There is no doubt that women deserve better choices than the ones we're being handed in our present society."

