

New study links birth control pill with multiple sclerosis

BY COLIN KERR, Fri Feb 28, 2014

PHILADELPHIA, PA, February 28, 2014 ([LifeSiteNews.com](#)) – A new study has found that women who use the contraceptive pill may be as much as 50 percent more likely to develop multiple sclerosis.



The study was conducted by the Kaiser Permanente Southern California medical group, under the leadership of Dr. Kerstin Hellwig, and contradicts previous research that had [suggested](#) that use of the pill reduces its likelihood.

According to the [press release](#) issued by the American Academy of Neurology, “Women who had used hormonal contraceptives were 35 percent more likely to develop MS than those who did not use them. Those who had used the contraceptives but had stopped at least one month before symptoms started were 50 percent more likely to develop MS.”

“A total of 29 percent of the women with MS and 24 percent of those without MS had used hormonal contraceptives for at least three months in the three years before symptoms began. The majority used estrogen/progestin combinations.”

“These findings suggest that using hormonal contraceptives may be contributing at least in part to the rise in the rate of MS among women,” said Hellwig.

Although there are a number of factors that need to be considered, [according](#) to the World Health Organization, incidences of MS are much higher in wealthier parts of the world, especially among wealthier segments of those societies, which would also coincide with heavier contraceptive pill use. In Europe and North America the incidence of MS is approximately 80 in 100,000, and occurs most often in women between ages 20 and 40. Women are twice as likely to get it as men.

The new research will be presented at the American Academy of Neurology’s annual meeting in Philadelphia at the end of April and yet it is doubtful that the findings will greatly influence pill use.

Even Hellwig was herself [Dismissive](#) of the implications of her study for everyday behaviour. “There may be some environmental factor that we have not been able to allow for, we are not telling women to stop using the pill,” she said.

According to the Guttmacher Institute, in 2010, approximately 17 percent of women aged 15-44 were [using](#) the pill, while about 80 percent of sexually-active women have used it at some point.