POLICY & PRACTICE

Reducing Unintended Pregnancies

In the absence of publicly funded family planning services, the number of abortions and unplanned pregnancies in the United States would have been nearly 50% higher in 2004, according to an analysis from the Guttmacher Institute, which conducts research on reproductive health issues. The researchers estimated that in 2004, women who received care at publicly funded family planning clinics avoided more than 1.4 million unintended pregnancies. The researchers also calculated that the government saved about \$4 for every \$1 spent on family planning services. "These new data add to the growing body of evidence that investing in publicly funded contraceptive services can make an enormous impact on helping women reduce unintended pregnancies, abortions, and unplanned births, all while saving money," Lawrence Finer, Ph.D., one of the study authors, said in a statement. The findings are based on a variety of data sources including results from the National Survey of Family Growth, Title X data on clients and revenues, data on Medicaid expenditures, and previously published estimates of unintended pregnancies. The study, which was funded by a grant from the Department of Health and Human Services, appears in the August issue of the Journal of Health Care for the Poor and Underserved and is available online at www.guttmacher.org.

ACOG Highlights HIV/AIDS

The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists is urging ob.gyns. to pay special attention to African American and Hispanic women who may be at risk for HIV/AIDS infection. In a committee opinion issued this month, ACOG noted that African American and Hispanic women account for more than 80% of new diagnoses of HIV/AIDS in women the United States. These women are at an increased risk for HIV infection for several reasons but often they acquire the disease through heterosexual contact with a partner who did not disclose their risk factors for the disease. ACOG recommends routine screening for all women aged 19-64 years and targeted screening for women outside of that age range who are at risk. All women, particularly minority women, should receive counseling on safe sex practices and consistent condom use, ACOG recommended. And physicians need to train their staff on risk reduction interventions aimed at minority women. The committee opinion is published in the August issue of Obstetrics and Gynecology.

Court to Review Va. Abortion Ban

This fall a federal appeals court will reconsider its decision to strike down Virginia's ban on so-called partial birth abortion. The 4th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals recently granted a petition filed by the state to rehear the case of *Richmond Medical Center v. Herring* with a full panel of judges. In May, a three-judge panel of the appeals court struck down the abortion ban, saying that it imposed an "undue burden on a woman's right to choose an abortion." Critics first challenged the law in 2003 saying that it was so broad it would essentially outlaw all common abortion methods starting in the

early second trimester. Oral arguments in

the case are schedule for late October.

New Leadership in Women's Health

Dr. Janine Austin Clayton, an ophthalmologist and researcher, has been appointed as the new deputy director of the Office of Research on Women's Health at the National Institutes of Health. Most recently, Dr. Clayton was the deputy clinical director at the National Eye Institute, also part of the NIH. In her new post, Dr. Clayton will work on the administration of research programs, policies on inclusion of women and minorities in clinical research, and coordination of activities across NIH. The research office aims to ensure that women are adequately represented on research studies supported by NIH and to help women advance in careers in the biomedical sector.

Feds Scrutinize Generic Maker

India's Ranbaxy Inc., one of the top 10 generic drug makers in the world, is being investigated by various arms of the federal government for allegedly introducing "adulterated or misbranded products" into the U.S. market. The company's auditor, Parexel Consulting, is also under scrutiny. According to a subpoena for documents filed in the U.S. District Court for the District of Maryland by the Department of Justice and the U.S. Attorney's Office in Maryland, Ranbaxy submitted false information to the Food and Drug Administration on sterility and bioequivalence, covered up good manufacturing practice violations, and defrauded Medicare. Rep. John Dingell (D-Mich.) and Rep. Bart Stupak (D-Mich.) said that they will formally investigate the Ranbaxy situation. "If these allegations are true, Ranbaxy has imperiled the safety of Americans in a manner similar to the generic drug scandal we uncovered 20 years ago," said Rep. Dingell.

-Mary Ellen Schneider

