

POLICY & PRACTICE

Parental Notification Fails

An attempt to require parental notification for minors seeking an abortion in California failed last month in a special election. The vote on Proposition 73 was 52.6% against and 47.4% for the measure, according to the California Board of Elections. Voters were asked to amend the California constitution to prohibit abortion for an unemancipated minor until 48 hours after a physician notifies the minor's parent or legal guardian. The proposal would have allowed for an exception in the case of a medical emergency or with a court order waiving notice. If enacted, Proposition 73 would have authorized monetary damages against physicians for violating the notice requirement. The proposal was opposed by a number of groups including the American Academy of Pediatrics California chapter and the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, District IX chapter.

Yates Conviction Overturned

The Texas Court of Appeals last month upheld a lower court ruling that overturned the murder conviction of Andrea Yates in the drowning deaths of three of her children. The case is likely to go to trial again unless the district attorney's office and the defense can reach a plea deal. "We're extremely disappointed and surprised by the decision," Alan Curry, assistant district attorney for the appellate division of the Harris County district attorney's office told this newspaper. The ruling by the lower court—the Court of Appeals for the First District of Texas—found that false testimony given by a psychiatrist testifying for the prosecution could have substantially affected the judgment of the jury and violated the defendant's right to due process. The psychiatrist testified falsely that an episode of "Law & Order" on postpartum depression in which a woman drowned her children in the bathtub had aired shortly before Ms. Yates committed the murders.

Groups Demand Action on Plan B

The Food and Drug Administration should abandon the current proposed rulemaking process for Plan B emergency contraception and approve over-the-counter status for the product for women of all ages, according to a letter from the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists and a number of other women's health advocates. The coalition sent the letter during the comment period the agency opened in August to gather more information on the application from Barr Laboratories to make Plan B (levonorgestrel) available over the counter for women aged 16 years and older. "Plan B needs to be on the counter with condoms and other over-the-counter contraceptives to encourage use of the product," the groups wrote in the letter. "A dual status product will force Plan B behind the counter in most pharmacies, needlessly increasing the cost and burden to pharmacists and to women, and likely, discourage use."

Costs of Intimate Partner Violence

The average cost for a woman who is the victim of intimate partner violence is about \$948 per incident, according to re-

searchers from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The cost includes the cost of medical care, mental health services, and productivity losses. The average cost for men who are victims of domestic violence is about \$387. Intimate partner violence includes physical, sexual, or psychological harm to another by a current or former partner or spouse and affects more than 32 million Americans each year, according to the CDC. Researchers found that intimate partner violence against women leads to more emergency department visits and

hospitalizations, compared with violence against men. The findings were published in the journal *Violence and Victims* (2005;20:379-91). "This study clearly shows the true impact of domestic violence," said Ileana Arias, Ph.D., director of CDC's National Center for Injury Prevention and Control and coauthor of the study, in a press release. "Domestic violence, especially against women, causes a range of emotional, physical, and financial harm for victims and their families. We need to continue our efforts to prevent this type of violence, including broadening our focus to also address the needs of men who are victims."

Teenage Birth Rate Drops

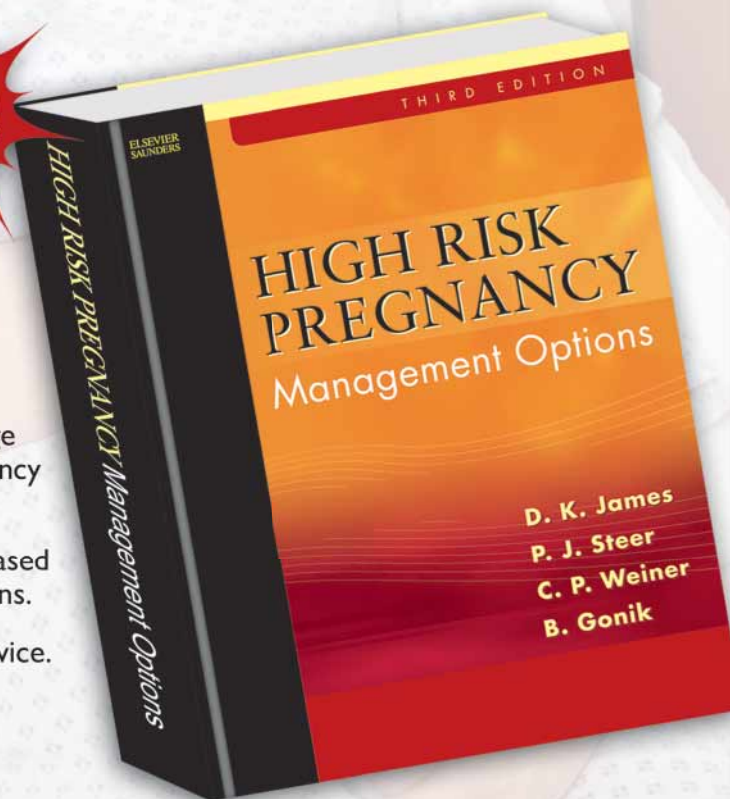
The birth rate among teenage girls continued to decline in 2004, according to the CDC's National Center for Health Statistics. The birth rate for girls aged 15-19 years dropped to the historic low of 41 births per 1,000 last year. Births rose among older women, increasing 4% for women aged 35-39 years and 3% for women aged 40-44 years. The NCHS reported 4.1 million births in 2004, up nearly 1% from 2003. The general fertility rate rose slightly last year to 66.3 live births per 1,000 women, compared with 66.1 live births per 1,000 women in 2003.

—Mary Ellen Schneider

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HIGH RISK PREGNANCY