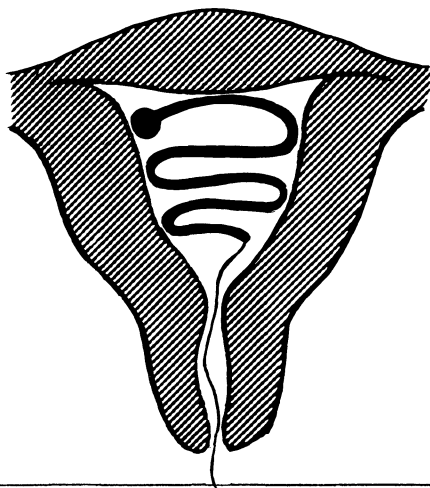


Written in Anger

Sandra Steinhouse



Écrit en colère

Une femme victime de l'indifférence et de la négligence de gynécologues masculins, devient stérile et exprime sa rage.

I cannot become pregnant. I blame the doctors and their lack of responsibility when it comes to dealing with women and their bodies. Doctors disregarded me as a person and treated my body as loose parts disconnected from a whole.

I have had different IUDs inserted for the past eleven years and been involved with women's issues for the past eight years. And on the whole I have never considered myself unaware about my own body. But my following experiences testify to the fact that women have to know even more about their own bodies in order that we may *take care of ourselves*.

In June 1976, I was taking a French course in a small town in Quebec—Trois Rivières. I developed terrible abdominal pains and phoned my gynecologist in Montreal. He was out of town but I assumed that my best bet would be to return to Montreal and go to the emergency ward of one of the larger hospitals. Since I had been to the Jewish General Hospital before, I went there. I was seen by a male doctor who pushed and prodded at my abdomen and advised me to curb all my eating of salads, vegetables and fruits. Although I mentioned that I had an IUD he never once examined me internally.

I returned to Trois Rivières and after six days I was doubled in pain. I again phoned my gynecologist in Montreal. This time I insisted that another gynecologist in the office should see me.

Upon internal examination it was found that I had a severe infection in my uterus (due most probably to the IUD) and he prescribed antibiotics with an abstinence from intercourse for six weeks. The doctor was amazed to learn that I had not been examined internally. He said, 'Anytime a woman has pain at the level of her navel or below, it should be assumed that she has a pelvic infection and definitely examined internally.'

Fine, *I learned something vital but too late*. It is also important to realize that at no time did this doctor talk to me about the consequences of a uterine infection.

He prescribed birth control pills to take when the six weeks were over and mentioned that I could have another IUD inserted in October (in three months time). (Was he trying to make more money for the pharmaceutical firms?) This I proceeded to do.

In the summer of 1977, we decided to have a baby and I had my IUD removed. By December of '77, I had still not conceived.

Purely coincidentally, a female friend mentioned that she could never become pregnant because of a pelvic infection she had from an IUD. It had travelled and blocked her Fallopian tubes. This set me thinking. But since the gynecologist had never mentioned it to me, the idea that it would happen to me seemed slim. I was still under the impression that doctors tried to care for women.

I arranged to have a uterogram done by a radiologist and sure enough, I am sterile. *I cannot have the baby that we want so much*. My Fallopian tubes are scarred and completely blocked.

I am very angry at the medical profession. 1. The doctor did not bother to examine me internally and left me with an acute pelvic infection. 2. My gynecologist never bothered to inform me that one of the side effects of an infection from an IUD can be sterility. 3. The gynecologist did not warn me of the consequences of a uterine infection—that my tubes could be scarred and blocked. What is their job?

If the doctors had cared about me as a person—I would not have built up the expectation that I could have a baby and I would not have been so shattered when I found out I couldn't.

Furthermore, I would not have had to ingest birth control pills for no reason at all. Since one of the side effects of these pills is blood clots, supposing I had developed a blood clot? For what reason? *Because a doctor forgot I was a whole person and that things should be explained*. He should not have been treating just my infection and waiting for me to return in order to diagnose my sterility—or by chance a blood clot.

Since the medical profession is not helping us women in our search for health we must pass on our experiences and learn from each other.