

by cbpolis 2 years ago

Contraceptive Conundrum meeting - August 8, 2015

A recap of conversation about the meeting on Twitter

Note: This Storify provides details about a meeting which billed itself as a scientific symposium on contraception, but which unfortunately did not proceed in a scientific manner. In my view, all credible evidence on the risks and benefits of contraception - regardless of what that evidence says - should be presented fairly and accurately. Moving forward, individuals from all perspectives who are interested in protecting and promoting women's health should be able to agree on and work together towards that goal.

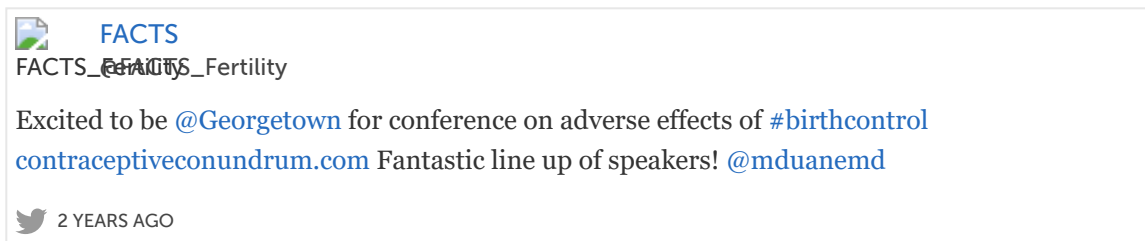
The [Contraceptive Conundrum](#) meeting, held on August 8, 2015, was organized by [Vicki Thorn](#), founder of the National Office for Post Abortion Reconciliation and Healing.

It was hosted at [Georgetown University](#), the nation's oldest Catholic and Jesuit University, in conjunction with the [Edmund D. Pellegrino Center for Clinical Bioethics](#), which describes itself as "filling a unique need for bioethics that is directly oriented towards clinical medicine and strongly rooted in the Catholic and Jesuit tradition".

Dr. [Marguerite Duane](#), co-founder and Executive Team Leader of [FACTS](#) (a collaborative group focused on teaching fertility awareness-based methods, whose [primary principle](#) is that "Fertility is a normal aspect of reproductive physiology that does not require treatment"), also played a major role in the meeting.

The meeting website described the intended audience as " anyone interested in the issue, including students, researchers, medical professionals, counselors, and interested others whose work or personal life relies on this research data".

While description of the conference on the website did not clarify that the discussion would focus exclusively on risks of contraception (rather than a holistic discussion of contraceptive risks and benefits), several Tweets from participants suggested this view.





[#ContraceptiveConundrum](#) Dr. Duane advocating for full disclosure of RISKS of hormonal bc to patients [@mduanemd](#) [pic.twitter.com/hkOFKDbC7x](#)

CYCLEBEADS [@CYCLEBEADS](#) · 2 YEARS AGO



Marguerite Duane
[@mduanemd](#)

Outstanding presentations this morning at [#ContraceptiveConundrum](#) conference showing the science supporting adverse effects of [#birthcontrol](#)

2 YEARS AGO




Natural Womanhood
[@naturwomanhood](#)

A wealth of info at the [#ContraceptiveConundrum](#) conference. Evidence speaks - [#thePill](#) is a risk to [#womenshealth](#). [#NFP](#) [#FAM](#) [#knowyourbody](#)

2 YEARS AGO


[Kevin Donovan](#) opened the meeting by stating that we must be especially vigilant in the case of contraceptive medications, because they treat no disease in their primary use. He claimed that the side effects of contraception have not been publicized.

Several speakers, such as [Chandler Marrs](#), made several scientifically unsupported claims:

 Lupus and Crohn's disease are connected to use of oral contraceptives. #birthcontrol
http://t.co/Lv64v7wvK1

Lupus and Crohn's disease are connected to use of oral contraceptives. #birthcontrol
pic.twitter.com/Lv64v7wvK1

 CYCLEBEADS @CYCLEBEADS · 2 YEARS AGO


 **Chelsea Polis, PhD**
@cbpolis


That's misleading. OCs don't ↑ risk of acquiring lupus. Citation, @ChanatLucine? @CycleBeads
#ContraceptiveConundrum twitter.com/CycleBeads/sta...

 2 YEARS AGO

 **Chelsea Polis, PhD**
@cbpolis


Furthermore, low-dose OCs likely ok in women with mild lupus. lupusinternational.com/Living-With-Lu... @ChanatLucine @CycleBeads

 2 YEARS AGO


 **Chelsea Polis, PhD**
@cbpolis

And, @CDCgov MEC provides guidance on use of contraception in women w/Lupus, e.g.,
cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/m... @ChanatLucine @CycleBeads


 2 YEARS AGO

 **Chelsea Polis, PhD**
@cbpolis


And #OCs/Crohn's? AFAIK, prelim data raise concern; but not definitive. Good write up here:
medicaldaily.com/birth-control-... twitter.com/CycleBeads/sta...

 2 YEARS AGO

Meeting host and FACTS co-Founder, Marguerite Duane amplified some of the inaccurate statements made by Chandler Marrs.

 **Marguerite Duane**
@mduanemd

@ChanatLucine Relationship b/n #ThePill and blood clots are time dependent and effects accumulate. The longer your on it -> higher your risk

 2 YEARS AGO



Chelsea Polis, PhD

@cbpolis

That's inaccurate. VT risk decreases w/longer use duration. More concern around initiation.

[@mduanemd](#) [@ChanatLucine](#) [twitter.com/mduanemd/statu...](#)



2 YEARS AGO

Ross Pelton, who runs [The Natural Pharmacist](#), spoke about how OCs deplete certain nutrients. Indeed, some of this is supported by the peer-reviewed literature. Experts have suggested that supplementation may help avoid deficiencies. Concerningly, Mr. Pelton promoted specific supplement products during his talk. He did not disclose his financial ties to those products until he was later asked specifically for a conflict of interest disclosure.



CycleBeads

@CycleBeads

Dr. Pelton: OC's deplete more nutrients than any other commonly prescribed medications.

[#birthcontrol](#) [#nutrition](#)



2 YEARS AGO



Chelsea Polis, PhD

@cbpolis

Depletion of certain nutrients may occur w/OCs, supplements can help.

[europeanreview.org/wp/wp-content/...](#) [#ContraceptiveConundrum](#)

[twitter.com/CycleBeads/sta...](#)



2 YEARS AGO



Chelsea Polis, PhD

@cbpolis

Also, contraceptive researchers looking at novel approaches to meet nutrient benchmarks, like folate-fortified OCs: [ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/23534865](#).



2 YEARS AGO

Both Marrs and Pelton stated that they lack access to scientific journals, and rely upon freely available information, rather than studies published in journals, most of which are behind a paywall. This limits their exposure to the universe of scientific information, and raises questions about how they can be presented as credible experts familiar with the science around these important issues.

This provided some context to other statements made by Chandler Marrs, for example, when she said that most of what we know about hormonal contraception comes from advertising. Statements like this are in stark contrast to the existence of decades of scientific research examining the safety, efficacy, and acceptability of hormonal contraceptive methods.

**Chelsea Polis, PhD**

@cbpolis

Two speakers at #ContraceptiveConundrum, @ChanatLucine & @RossPeltonRPh, noted that they lack access to scientific journals. (1/2)



2 YEARS AGO

**Chelsea Polis, PhD**

@cbpolis

I understand costs are high! But I'm concerned when ppl are featured as experts, yet lack access to complete scientific information. (2/2)



2 YEARS AGO

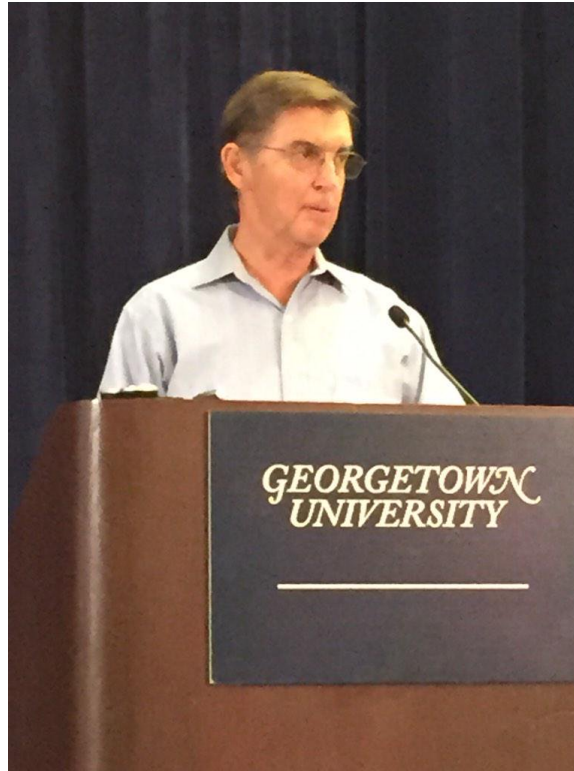
**Jennifer Gunter**~~DrJenGunter~~
DrJenGunter

How can you speak at supposedly scientific conference without accessing the science????
twitter.com/cbpolis/status...



2 YEARS AGO

Dr. Frederick vom Saal made a number of statements related to the possibility that use of oral contraception may adversely affect fetuses. [CycleBeads](#) promoted this view, until it was noted that this perpetuated scientifically unsupported information (at which time they deleted those Tweets).




Dr. Fred Von Saal talk Getting Pregnant on [#ThePill](#) -Likelihood of Adverse Effects on Fetuses
[#contraceptiveconundrum](#) [pic.twitter.com/bS7ssZAKUp](#)

 **FACTS** @FACTS_FERTILITY · 2 YEARS AGO



Jane Doe, MD
@DrJaneChi


WTF this is totally untrue. [blogs.webmd.com/womens-health/...](#) [twitter.com/CycleBeads/sta...](#)

 2 YEARS AGO



Chelsea Polis, PhD
@cbpolis


Very uncomfortable that [@CycleBeads](#) (an important product) promotes misinfo on other
[#contraceptives](#). cc: [@USAIDGH](#) [twitter.com/CycleBeads/sta...](#)

 2 YEARS AGO



Chelsea Polis, PhD
@cbpolis

[#FP](#) community should present risks/benefits of ALL methods. Promoting [#FAM](#) need not =
unfair bashing of other options. [@CycleBeads](#) [@USAIDGH](#)

 2 YEARS AGO



Chelsea Polis, PhD

@cbpolis

When it comes to public health, it's NOT ok to twist the truth to sell your product; be it beads, books, classes, meds, or documentaries.



2 YEARS AGO



Chelsea Polis, PhD

@cbpolis

Looks like @CycleBeads has deleted some (not all) of the inaccurate Tweets on oral [#contraception](#). It's a start! Thanks for caring, folks.



2 YEARS AGO

Some of the speakers were excellent and made very scientific, well-substantiated presentations, particularly Dr. Nicole Petersen and Dr. S. Craig Roberts. They both presented research related to potential unanticipated side effects of oral contraceptives (OCs) - but in a credible manner. They both suggested that the state of the evidence was not sufficient to support a recommendation to reduce use of OCs, and also noted that while adverse side effects may become evident in the future, unanticipated benefits of OC use may also become evident in the future.



Chelsea Polis, PhD

@cbpolis

Some speakers were outstanding! Others not evidence-based. One said Gardasil was dangerous. [#ContraceptiveConundrum](#) [twitter.com/FACTS_Fertilit...](#)



2 YEARS AGO



Setareh Tais, ND

@SetarehTaisND

[@cbpolis](#) [@DrJenGunter](#) which speaker was outstanding?



2 YEARS AGO



Chelsea Polis, PhD

@cbpolis

[@SetarehTaisND](#) [@DrJenGunter](#) IMO, Dr. Nicole Petersen and [@SCraigRoberts](#) delivered clear, credible, interesting talks.



2 YEARS AGO

Tweets about these presentations by conference organizers referred to the questions raised by the title of the talk or to a subset of potentially concerning findings. Those Tweets did not contain information on the potentially beneficial effects of OCs presented by both speakers, nor to their balanced, scientific conclusions putting their findings in context.




Dr. Nicole Peterson to speak about "What does [#ThePill](#) do to the brain?" Can't wait to learn [#ContraceptiveConundrum](#) pic.twitter.com/HAKqVqzyjm

 MARGUERITE DUANE @MDUANEMD · 2 YEARS AGO



Chelsea Polis, PhD
@cbpolis


Dr. Peterson's conclusion: "No clear answer yet. Only evidence-based position is agnostic."
[#ContraceptiveConundrum](#) [twitter.com/mduanemd/statu...](https://twitter.com/mduanemd/status...)

 2 YEARS AGO



Marguerite Duane
@mduanemd


Dr. Roberts asks: "Does [#ThePill](#) alter women's preferences in choosing a mate?"
[#ContraceptiveConundrum](#) @naturwomanhood @CycleTechGlobal


 2 YEARS AGO



Marguerite Duane
@mduanemd


Dr. Craig Roberts "Women who met their partner when on [#ThePill](#) are more likely to initiate divorce" [#ContraceptiveConundrum](#) @naturwomanhood

 2 YEARS AGO




Chelsea Polis, PhD
@cbpolis

.@SCraigRoberts spoke to mixed effects of using OCs when met partner; couples also more likely to still be together. [twitter.com/mduanemd/statu...](https://twitter.com/mduanemd/status/234567890)


 2 YEARS AGO


It is unclear why - if this was intended to be a scientific meeting - only adverse findings were being solicited and publicized? Was the ultimate goal to share scientific information, or to promote a pre-determined agenda?



Chelsea Polis, PhD
@cbpolis


To truly spread truth about [#contraception](#), we should report both positive & negative findings shared, right [@mduanemd](#)? [@SCraigRoberts](#)


 2 YEARS AGO



Marguerite Duane
@mduanemd


[@cbpolis](#) [@SCraigRoberts](#) [@ChanatLucine](#) Agreed! And it should begin with [#pharma](#) sharing truth about real risks of hormonal [#birthcontrol](#) 1/2

 2 YEARS AGO




Marguerite Duane
@mduanemd

[@cbpolis](#) [@SCraigRoberts](#) [@ChanatLucine](#) [#pharma](#) highlights [#ThePill](#) benefits but risks are buried. Sadly, so are some women 2/2 [@NuvaRingTruth](#)


 2 YEARS AGO

It is fully appropriate - and important - to discuss the risks and benefits of all contraceptive methods. However, the conference organizers approach did not strive towards promoting this kind of balanced information. In conjunction with promoting a biased sample of messages via Twitter, it is difficult to conclude that the intention of the meeting was to discuss data in an unbiased manner.



Chelsea Polis, PhD
@cbpolis

Came w/ open mind, but was disappointed [#ContraceptiveConundrum](#). hadn't asked epidemiologists/contraceptive experts to address issues raised.

 2 YEARS AGO

**Chelsea Polis, PhD**

@cbpolis

I'm tweeting on [#ContraceptiveConundrum](#) b/c I agree w/ its basic premise: ppl should understand risks. But not all speakers adhered to data.



2 YEARS AGO

**Chelsea Polis, PhD**

@cbpolis

I have no doubt: [#ContraceptiveConundrum](#) organizers want to protect ♀'s health. I do, too. We can all do that together in a balanced manner.



2 YEARS AGO

We must clearly provide facts on the risks AND benefits of all contraceptive methods, so individuals have full informed choice, and can choose the method that works best in the context of their own lives, values, and preferences. Fear-mongering and cherry-picking evidence helps nobody.

**Kathryn LaRoche, MSc**

kathryn@kathynlaroche

Let's stop fear mongering and encourage everyone to get the facts + make the best [#birthcontrol](#) choice for them [#ContraceptiveConundrum](#)



2 YEARS AGO

Addendum 11-6-2015: I've pasted in a Tweet from one of the individuals invited to speak at the meeting, who read this Storify today. He noted that he agrees with my assessment of the meeting.

**S Craig Roberts**

@SCraigRoberts

Plain-speaking from the excellent [@cbpolis](#) about the recent contraception conference in DC. Sadly, I agree storify.com/cbpolis/contra...



2 YEARS AGO

Sweetening the Pill

Ricki Lake and Abby Epstein (makers of a controversial film on home-birth, "The Business of Being Born", which has been [critiqued by scientists](#)), also attended at the Contraceptive Conundrum meeting. They filmed parts of the meeting and previewed the trailer for their [upcoming documentary](#), *Sweetening the Pill*, based on a book by the same name.

Several articles (such as those by [Gretchen Sisson at Bitch Magazine](#), [Lindsay Beyerstein at Slate](#), [Cynthia McKelvey at the Daily Dot](#), and [Lauren O'Neal at the New Inquiry](#)) have detailed the numerous scientific

inaccuracies in the book. Public health professionals will be watching to see if Lake and Epstein will do a better job than the book did, with regard to accurately representing scientific evidence.



Big thanks to these people who supported the STP Kickstarter [@PCOSAA](#) [@lucyeodonoghue](#) [@toLaborDoulas](#) [@RadiantMomCoach](#) pic.twitter.com/eSQvwFZggm

 RICKI LAKE [@RICKILAKE](#) · 2 YEARS AGO