Myths, Beliefs, and Continuation of Oral Contraception

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In the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, there was concern regarding the cultural acceptability of modern contraceptive methods, and the influence that knowledge and beliefs about reproductive anatomy and physiology might have on contraceptive initiation and continuation.

Interest in these interactions has waned, but knowledge and beliefs may still be important topics, even in rich countries such as the United States.
Main Questions

• Do users of oral contraceptives (OCs) who believe it is necessary to take a break from the pill in order to give the body a rest had lower rates of contraceptive continuation than women who believe otherwise?

• Do women who believe in taking a break resume using OCs after stopping at higher rates than other women?

• How does belief in taking a break correlate with beliefs regarding how the pill works, as well as beliefs regarding the positive and negative side effects of taking the pill?
Discontinuation of OCPs by belief that women should take a break from the pill to let their bodies rest

- Did not discontinue OCPs
- Discontinued OCPs

Believe women should take a break
- Did not discontinue OCPs: 0.738
- Discontinued OCPs: 0.263

Do not believe women should take a break
- Did not discontinue OCPs: 0.803
- Discontinued OCPs: 0.198
Hazard Ratios for Pill Discontinuation

Do not believe women should take a break
(vs Believe women should take a break) 0.58 **(0.41, 0.81)

Planned OC Use
(vs ≥ 3 months or less)
- 4-12 months 0.62 (0.28, 1.38)
- 1-2 years 0.49* (0.25, 0.99)
- 2 years or more 0.33 **(0.17, 0.67)
- Don’t Know/Not Sure 0.39 **(0.20, 0.79)

Clinic users
(vs Cross-border OTC users)
- ≥ 6 pill packs 1.17 (0.70, 1.96)
- 1-5 pill packs 1.91** (1.30, 2.85)

Reported side effects
(vs. No reported side effects) 1.33 (0.94, 1.92)
Beliefs about how pill works

Kills/expels sperm: diminishes sperm's potency, including affecting ability of sperm to fertilize egg

- 21.3% Believe women should take a break
- 13.4% Do not believe women should take a break

Tricks body into thinking it is pregnant

- 10.9% Believe women should take a break
- 4.7% Do not believe women should take a break
Positive benefits of the pill

- Promotes healthy hair growth and prevents hair loss: 11.2%
- Do not know: 7.1%

Believe women should take a break: 7.0%
Do not believe women should take a break: 3.8%
Negative effects of the pill

- **Causes cancer of reproductive tract (ovary, uterus, cervix) or causes breast cancer**
  - Believe women should take a break: 10.3%
  - Do not believe women should take a break: 3.6%

- **Fertility problems: infertility/causes delay in return to fertility**
  - Believe women should take a break: 9.2%
  - Do not believe women should take a break: 6.0%