



contraceptive

By Brett Emison

POSES SAME PROBLEMS AS PREDECESSORS?

More than 50 years ago, birth control was introduced to America. “The Pill” gave women more control over their bodies, but not without certain health risks.

One set of contraceptive pills — Bayer’s Yaz, Yasmin and Ocella — has been found to have particularly dangerous side effects. These drugs are marketed under different names, but are chemically the same. The problem lies primarily with their key chemical ingredient, drospirenone.

Yaz, Yasmin and Ocella combine estrogen with drospirenone. No other oral contraceptive (or birth control pill) contains the drug. In fact, the combination of chemicals in Yaz, Yasmin and Ocella has been linked to potentially deadly side effects, including heart attack, stroke, pulmonary embolism, deep vein thrombosis and gallbladder disease.

Despite these documented problems, Bayer released a new birth control pill this winter — Beyaz. Made of virtually the same chemical formulation as Yaz and Yasmin, Beyaz simply adds folic acid (vitamin B-9) to the Yaz formulation.

Recent studies have shown that

women using birth control pills that contain drospirenone are 64 percent more likely to develop blood clots than women taking birth control pills that do not contain the drospirenone hormone component. What’s more, studies also show that women are twice as likely as men to develop gallstones.

MARKETING PRACTICES

Yaz, Yasmin, Ocella and Beyaz are particularly dangerous because they have been marketed to young women with misleading advertising and false claims.

In fact, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has sent several letters to Bayer HealthCare Pharmaceuticals Inc. for what it calls “misleading” advertising claims it found “particularly troubling” because they serve to “undermine the communication of important risk information, minimizing these risks and misleadingly suggesting that Yaz is safer than has been demonstrated by substantial evidence or substantial clinical experience.”

In addition, these drugs have been targeted as a means to reduce acne or reduce premenstrual symptoms. To that end, some doctors have even prescribed these drugs for non-sexually active girls as an acne fighter.

BEYAZ VERSUS YAZ

In 2011, it became apparent to many that Bayer is attempting to repackage Yaz under a new name and only slightly different formulation: Beyaz includes folic acid — a known fighter of potential birth defects.

Even after being warned multiple times, it looks like Bayer will continue to produce and advertise these products. Stemming from the above complaints about Yaz, Bayer released a product with similar flaws, but in a slightly different formulation. Unfortunately, none of those modifications addressed the dangerous side effects of its predecessors.

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