

VASECTOMY VERSUS IUCD *

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1. AT PRESENT, of the various contraceptive techniques that are available, only two, namely vasectomy or sterilization operation of the male, and IUCD, satisfy all the following desirable criteria: (i) They are almost cent per cent effective. (ii) They are independent of patient's reliability—the most vital factor among the people with weak motivation, who have merely the desire but not the will to limit the size of their family. (iii) They are acceptable morally, psychologically and aesthetically. (iv) They are comparatively harmless. (v) They are less costly than others with the above properties. Till very recently vasectomy was regarded as superior to the other techniques. Of late, however, the IUCD appears to be gaining in prominence in the scale of the preferences of the people because it is not only virtually on par with the sterilization operation but also has the added advantage of being reversible, a technicality yet to be perfected in the case of sterilization operation. IUCD thus appears to be the ideal, and permanent, yet reversible method in the family-planning programme. There are, however, the aspects of cost and availability of other resources and, in particular, of medical personnel, to be taken into account while choosing between the two techniques. In this paper we have used two criteria, viz., gap between demand and supply of a qualified physician's time, and cost per pregnancy saved, in evaluating the superiority of one technique of birth control over the other. In our discussion we have assumed that for IUCD, only the services of a female physician, even in majority of the urban areas, will have to be provided. In the case of sterilization, because of the growing popularity of vasectomy, presumably, mainly the services of male doctors will be required.

2.1 Despite the growing receptivity for the new devices (IUCD), it has been emphasized that much remains to be done still. Alan F. Guttamcher¹ has raised a number of relevant questions in this context.

* Intra Uterine Contraceptive Devices.

† Views expressed in the paper are personal.

¹ Proceedings of the Second International Conference on IUCD, October 1964, New York, Excerpta Medica Foundation, International Congress series 86, p. 215.