A MUSEUM ON THE HISTORY OF CONTRACEPTION

THE SEARCH FOR ARTIFACTS BEGAN IN 1966

The task of collecting contraceptive artifacts turned out to be far more difficult than anticipated, as Percy Skuy, President of Ortho Pharmaceutical (Canada) Ltd. discovered in 1966 when he set out to establish a museum on the History of Contraception.

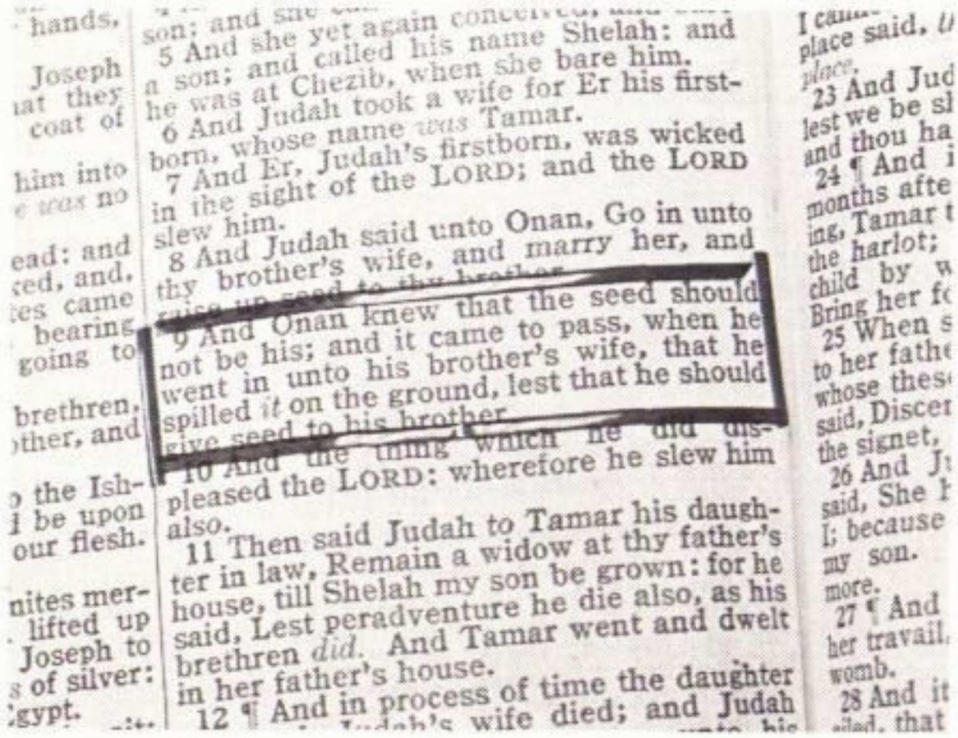
Mr. Skuy, then a manager with ORTHO realized soon after his search began that no one had worked toward putting together a broadscale collection of contraceptive devices and artifacts. Some people had saved a few interesting items, but it was only through intensive search and generous contributions from around the world that this "one of a kind" collection was assembled.

At the time of publication of this booklet, more than 270 artifacts are on display in the museum. The Public Affairs Department at ORTHO would welcome hearing from anyone who may have a contribution to make. Acknowledgement of such contributions appear alongside the articles on display.

The museum is housed at:

Ortho Pharmaceutical (Canada) Ltd.
19 Green Belt Drive
Don Mills, Ontario
M3C 1L9

and can be viewed by phone appointment through the Public Affairs Department at (416) 449-9444.



son; and she
5 And she yet again conceived, and
a son; and called his name Shelah: and
he was at Chezib, when she bare him.
6 And Judah took a wife for Er his first-
born, whose name *was* Tamar.
7 And Er, Judah's firstborn, was wicked
in the sight of the LORD; and the LORD
slew him.
8 And Judah said unto Onan, Go in unto
thy brother's wife, and marry her, and
9 And Onan knew that the seed should
not be his; and it came to pass, when he
went in unto his brother's wife, that he
spilled *it* on the ground, lest that he should
give seed to his brother.
10 And the thing which he did dis-
pleased the LORD: wherefore he slew him
also.
11 Then said Judah to Tamar his daugh-
ter in law, Remain a widow at thy father's
house, till Shelah my son be grown: for he
said, Lest peradventure he die also, as his
brethren *did*. And Tamar went and dwelt
in her father's house.
12 ¶ And in process of time the daughter
wife died; and Judah

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Joseph
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25 When s
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26 And Ju
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27 ¶ And
her travail,
womb.
28 And it
pulled, that

The following traces the development of contraception using artifacts on display at the museum as reference points.

Contraception can be traced back thousands of years.

The first mention of contraception – withdrawal – is found in the Old Testament in the book of Genesis, Chapter 38:9 (as illustrated).

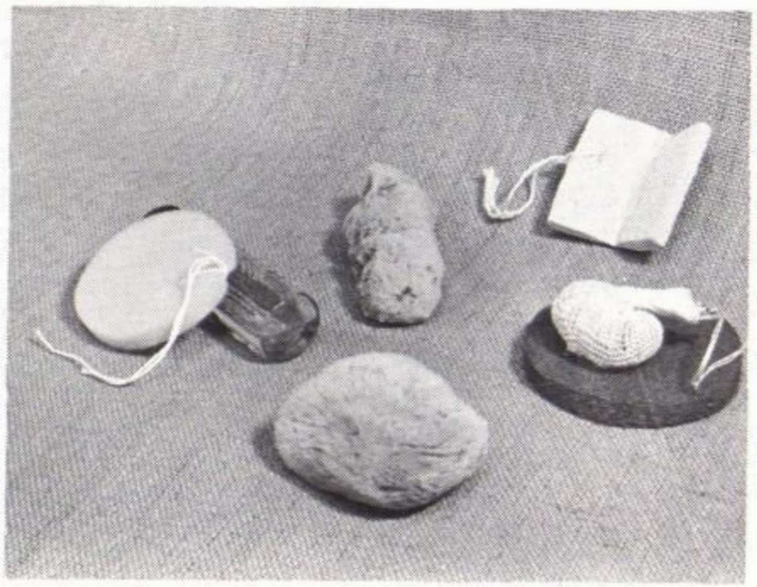
The ancient Egyptians described various forms of contraception in the first known medical text written on papyrus called the Petri or Kahun circa 1850 B.C. One method consisted of irrigating or plugging the vagina with a mixture of honey and natron (native sodium carbonate). The honey acted as a barrier and the natron as a spermicide.

The Egyptians also recommended the use of crocodile dung. The dung was mixed with a paste-like substance and inserted as a pessary into the vagina.

Reference to the use of dung in a contraceptive pessary reappears in various works in later years. The Arabian physician/philosopher, Al-Razi, described in the ninth century the use of elephant dung mixed with honey.

The Ebers Papyrus, circa 1550 B.C., details what is probably the first written prescription for a contraceptive tampon. The device prescribed was a medicated lint tampon designed: "...to cause that a woman should cease to conceive for one year, two years, or three years. Acacia and dates are ground fine with a hin* of honey, seedwool is moistened therewith and placed in her vulva". The ingredients are shown at left with a recreation of what the tampon probably looked like.

*an ancient measurement

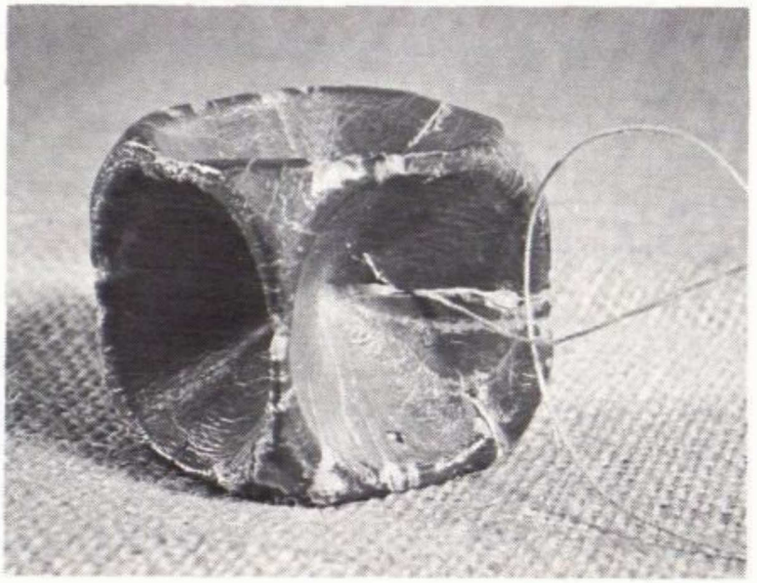


"Mokh" is a spongy substance that was used to prevent sperm from entering the womb. It is described in the Talmud (about 200 A.D.).

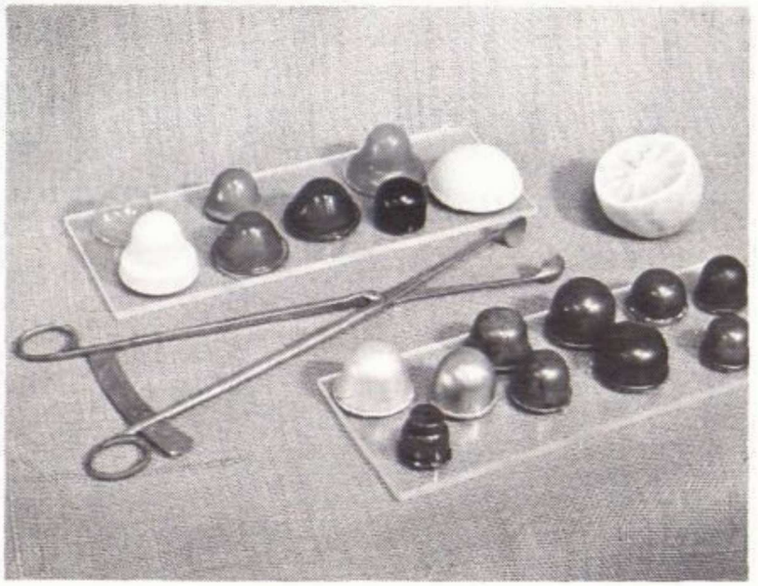
In the fourth century, the women of Constantinople used sponges moistened with diluted lemon juice. Presumably, they were unaware that the citric acid contained in lemons had some spermicidal action. Vaginal sponges dipped in vinegar or a soap solution, are still in use today in some parts of the world. Illustrated are examples of such sponges.

The history of the condom goes back to ancient times as a preventative for infectious disease. It is known that early Egyptian males used a sheath made out of animal membranes. The Italian anatomist Fallopius (1504) however, claimed invention of the condom when he devised a linen sheath to prevent the spread of syphilis.

The word "condom" was in common usage by the 18th century. It may have originated from a Dr. Condom who is purported to have made one for King Charles II. By this time, condoms were serving a dual purpose: protection against disease and prevention of pregnancy. Condoms made from rubber made their appearance about 1880, after the vulcanization of rubber. Latex condoms were introduced in the 1930's.



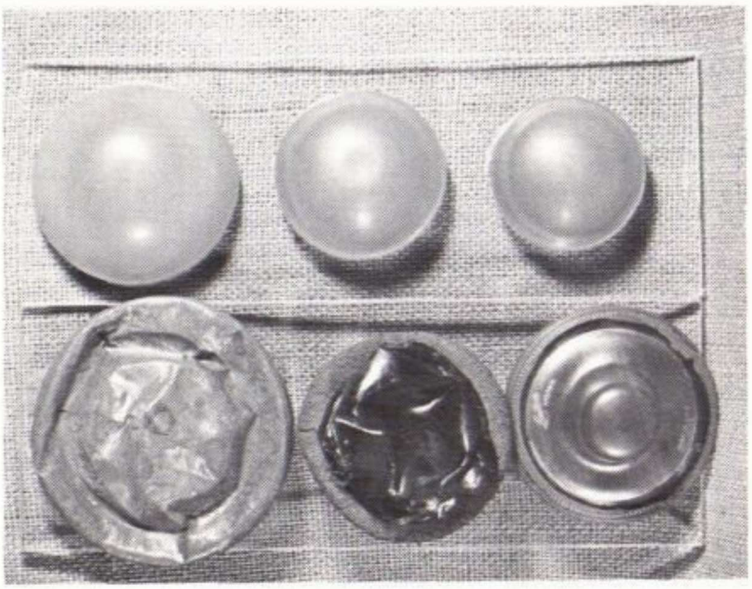
A rather bizarre barrier item was the Block Pessary. The device shown was inserted into the vagina with the hope that one of the concave surfaces would fit over the cervix. It was described in 1931 as "an instrument of torture".



In the mid-1700's, Casanova advocated the application of half a lemon, from which the juice had been extracted, as a cervical cap to be fitted over the cervix.

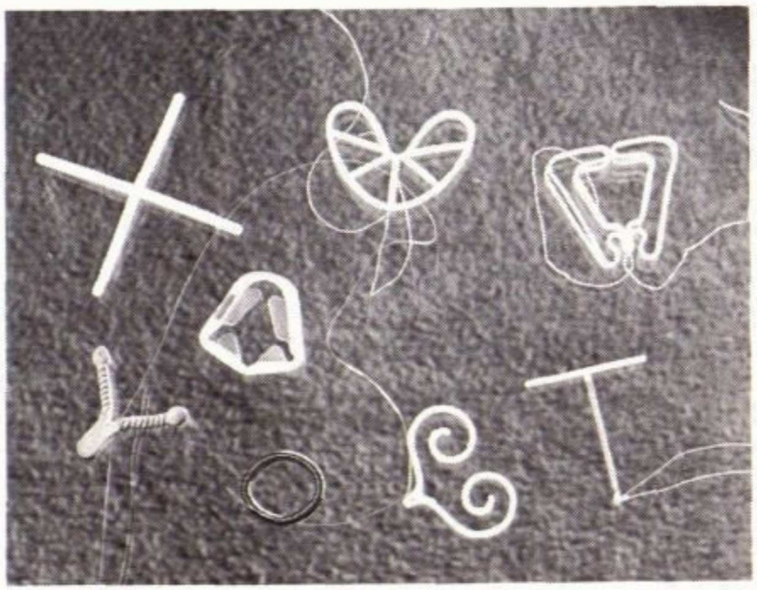
By the end of the nineteenth century cervical caps were produced in metal and rubber followed by plastic. A physician determined the size required often using specially designed calipers. Manual dexterity was required for the insertion and removal of this device.

Douching as a method of contraception was first mentioned by Dr. Charles Knowlton in 1832. He described solutions such as alum, sulphate of zinc, vinegar and liquid chloride of soda. Pictured is a douche-type syringe used in the 1920's.



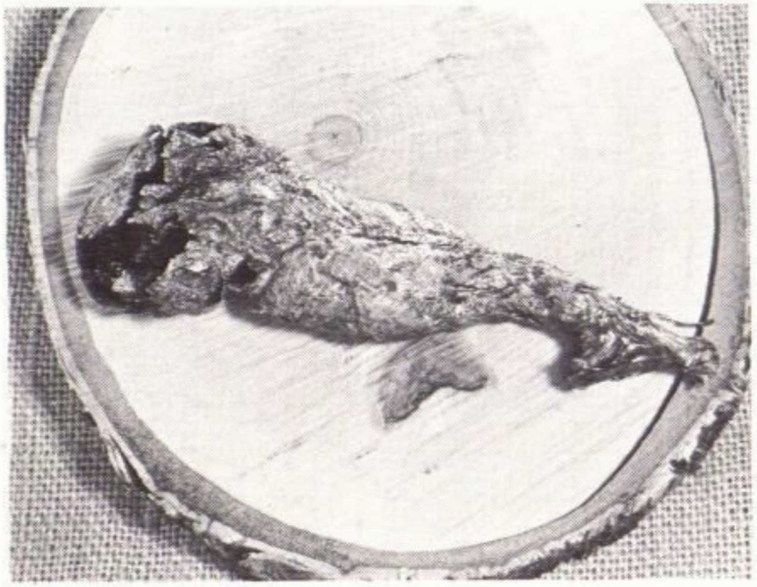
The use of the diaphragm was first described by Dr. Wilhelm Mensinga in 1880. Shown are examples of early type diaphragms and vault caps. The vaginal diaphragm of today attained popularity in North America around 1920 and is used with spermicidal jelly. It remains a widely used method of contraception.

Forerunners of the modern day intrauterine device are the wishbone intra-cervical device and the stem plug. These devices were placed in the cervix with the stem protruding into the uterus. It was intended that the device be removed each month, cleaned and re-inserted after the menstrual cycle. In many instances this was not done. Infection, cervical erosion and other complications often followed. This method was in use in the early 1900's.

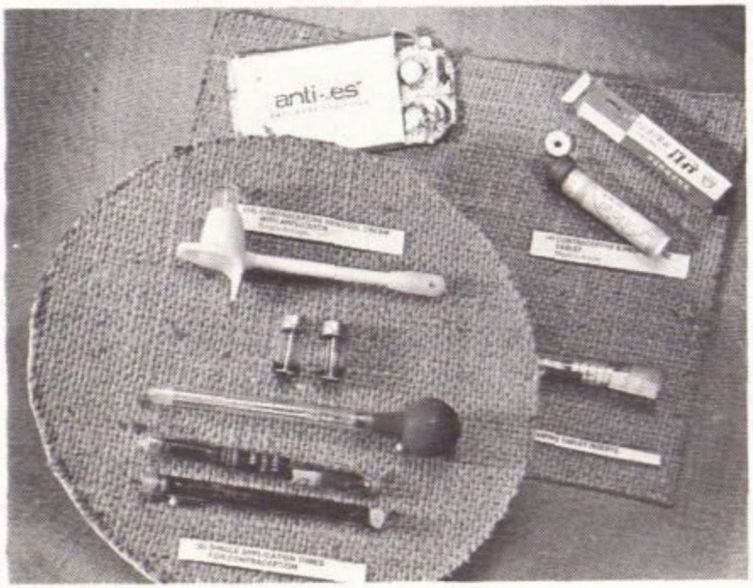


The present day intrauterine device can be traced back 3,000 years. Legend has it that smooth pebbles were inserted in the uterus of camels to prevent them from becoming pregnant during long desert crossings. In 1930, Dr. Grafenberg reported the use in Germany of silkworm thread and silver rings. Shown are examples of IUD's from around the world. Polyethylene is the most common material used, but rubber, metal, nylon and the incorporation of hormones can also be found.

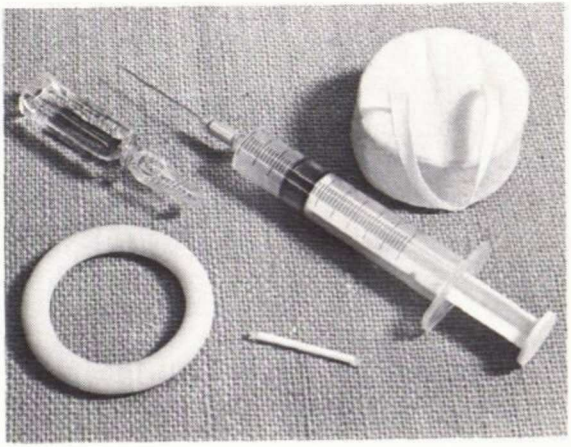
Throughout the recorded history of contraceptive methods, people drank concoctions and swallowed roots and plants. More than 4,000 years ago, women in China drank quicksilver (mercury) to combat fertility. Lead was also taken orally – and poisoning was not uncommon. Many fraudulent preparations were sold which promised from one month to one year's freedom from pregnancy. These ranged from harmless botanical substances in capsules to toxic plant substances. Carrot seeds were swallowed 400 years ago in India.



Dried beaver testicle brewed in a strong alcoholic solution was a method used in Northern New Brunswick. Women drank this potion in an attempt to prevent pregnancy.



The search for an effective spermicide has lead to the development of an assortment of contraceptive inserts, such as liquid-filled suppositories and spermicidal impregnated paper. Shown are examples of foaming tablets and single-dose applicators.



Research workers around the world are currently exploring new methods of contraception. The museum contains examples of futuristic methods such as: long-acting subdermal implants, contraceptive pellets, female injectables, vaginal rings impregnated with progestin, male orals, reversible vasectomy valves and a collagen sponge.

Ortho Pharmaceutical (Canada) Ltd. provides literature on contraceptive practices at no charge.

Notes

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