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 QUIZ QUESTION -- Select the one correct answer

- In Massachusetts-
- A. It is illegal to teach birth control techniques in the medical schools.
 - B. The personal practice of contraception is illegal.
 - C. The sale of condoms is forbidden for any purpose.
 - D. Doctors can be prosecuted for prescribing orally a contraceptive.
 - E. All of the above are true.
 - F. None of the above is true.
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In only two of the fifty United States is the physician's right to discuss and prescribe medical contraception for a patient limited; these states are Connecticut and Massachusetts. On the eve of Dr. Alan Guttmacher's lecture at this medical school, we would like to provide a perspective for the medical student on this burning issue. Dr. Guttmacher, the internationally renowned Director of Obstetrics and Gynecology at the Mt. Sinai Hospital, New York, will speak Wednesday, March 15, in the auditorium on "Birth Control: its place in America and the rest of the world."

We are dealing with a religious, moral, political, medical and social issue, but there is also the question of freedom and democratic principles. Exactly how is the medical student and the physician returned to the Middle Ages by the Massachusetts laws?

The law states: *) Section 20. Whoever knowingly advertises, prints, publishes, distributes or circulates, or knowingly causes to be advertised, printed, published, distributed or circulated, any pamphlet, printed paper, book, newspaper, notice, advertisement or reference, containing words or language giving or conveying any notice, hint, or reference, to any person, or to the name of any person, real or fictitious, from whom, or to any place, house, shop or office where any poison, drug, mixture, preparation, medicine, or noxious thing, or any instrument or means whatever, or any advice, direction, information or knowledge, may be obtained, for the purpose of causing or procuring the miscarriage of a woman pregnant with child, or of preventing, or which is represented as intended to prevent pregnancy, shall be punished by imprisonment in the state prison for not more than three years or in jail for not more than two and one half years or by a fine of not more than one thousand dollars.

Section 21: This section provides similar penalties for selling, lending, giving away or exhibiting articles for preventing conception or for unlawful abortion. In addition, advertising or writing anything on how to obtain such articles or manufacturing such items is illegal.

Bills to exempt the medical profession and medical schools from possible persecution under the above laws were opposed by the Archdiocese of Boston and defeated in the legislature several times in recent years. A closed-circuit TV program sponsored by the Searle Pharmaceutical Co. on the drug Enovid for an invited audience of doctors was suddenly cancelled two months ago at the Somerset Hotel. However, the present situation is as follows: **)

1. No physician has yet been convicted for prescribing orally or even in writing, a contraceptive. The druggist might be convicted if it could be proven in court that he knew the buyer intended to use it for that purpose.
2. No non-medical person has been prosecuted for orally giving information or addresses where contraceptives could be obtained.
3. The teaching of contraception in medical schools is legal as long as brand names or "advertising" are avoided.
4. The personal use of contraceptives is not illegal.

With this knowledge we hope students and faculty will turn out to hear Dr. Guttmacher, and thus demonstrate their hope that some day Massachusetts will return the practice of medicine to the scientific age of the 20th century.

*) General Laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Chapter 272

***) Birth Control and the Massachusetts Law. Planned Parenthood League
 229, Berkeley St. Boston, 1959. 50 cents.