

Statistics

- According to medical reports, the incidence of pregnancy for one-time sexual intercourse is 5%. By applying the 5% pregnancy rate to 64,080 women raped in the U.S. in 2005, there were up to 3,204 pregnancies as a result of rape. Bureau of Justice Statistics, Criminal Victimization, 2005, published September 2006.
- A 2003 survey by the Texas Association Against Sexual Assault found that 60 percent of emergency rooms did not offer emergency contraception to rape victims. Houston Chronicle, January 31, 2005.
- Men who admitted having forced their wives to have sex were 2.6 times more likely than other men to have caused an unplanned pregnancy. Population Reports: Ending Violence Against Women, 2000.
- The following are results from a national probability sample of 4008 adult American women in a survey assessing the prevalence and incidence of rape and related physical and mental health outcomes. RESULTS: The national rape-related pregnancy rate is 5.0% per rape among victims of reproductive age (aged 12 to 45); among adult women an estimated 32,101 pregnancies result from rape each year. Among 34 cases of rape-related pregnancy, the majority occurred among adolescents and resulted from assault by a known, often related perpetrator. Only 11.7% of these victims received immediate medical attention after the assault, and 47.1% received no medical attention related to the rape. A total 32.4% of these victims did not discover they were pregnant until they had already entered the second trimester; 32.2% opted to keep the infant whereas 50% underwent abortion and 5.9% placed the infant for adoption; an additional 11.8% had spontaneous abortion. Holmes, "Rape-related Pregnancy: Estimates and Descriptive Characteristics from a National Sample of Women," 1996.

Overview of the Issue

- Women may choose pregnancy prevention treatment by taking Emergency Contraception (EC) within 72 hours of her assault. EC is a concentrated dosage of oral contraception administered to prevent a pregnancy from occurring. It is not an abortion pill and actually prevents the need for an abortion.
- Sexual assault survivors who become pregnant risk re-victimization unless given the right to choose. Some choose to keep the child as an affirmation of their power to heal and to love. Some choose adoption and others abort. Women should be allowed any decision without reprobation or judgment.
- Survivors face complex issues and difficult decisions. Those with pro-life views may wish to abort; teens may be forced to abort; those who had consensual sex near the time of the assault may not know which is father.

Survivor Impact

- Many survivors become enmeshed in the variety of political opinion regarding abortion, emergency contraception and societal attitudes identifying the born child as the rapist's. The traumatic effects of sexual assault already complicate their decision. The most essential factor for healing is that she makes her own choices, not ones made for her by family, church, or community.
- Rape memories can have negative effects for pregnant women. Constant pelvic exams by multiple people, lack of privacy, increasing sensation in pelvic area and potential loss of self-control are all potential triggers.

What You Can Do

- A strong support system, professional help and the freedom to choose are crucial for the pregnant survivor. Family, friends and community should support and validate her choices and also deal with their own feelings about the pregnancy, abortion or adoption. Respect her decisions, even if you disagree.
- Pre-labor counseling and medical staff cooperation may lessen triggers during pregnancy procedures for the survivor. Fewer vaginal exams, pain relief and limited personnel during delivery can ease discomfort.
- Learn about the issues surrounding rape-related pregnancy. Support laws mandating emergency providers to offer sexual assault victims the choice for emergency contraception treatment.

Quotable

Women who have survived the trauma of sexual assault/incest and become pregnant should not have control over their bodies taken away again. Available emergency contraception and accessible pregnancy counseling preserves her control, while external pressures to keep or to abort do not. Protect all options so she may decide herself.

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