

Contact: Christine Hitchcock, Board of Directors FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Centre for Menstrual Cycle and Ovulation Research (CeMCOR)

tel: (604) 875 5917

email: chris.hitchcock@ubc.ca

OR

Contact: Ingrid Johnston-Robledo, Board of Directors

Department of Psychology, SUNY Fredonia

tel: (716) 673 3893

email: robledij@fredonia.edu

## SOCIETY FOR MENSTRUAL CYCLE RESEARCH CALLS FOR MORE RESEARCH ON LONG-TERM EFFECTS OF CYCLE-STOPPING CONTRACEPTIVES Menstruation Is Not A Disease

Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, June 8, 2007 – At the 2007 meetings of the Society for Menstrual Cycle Research, members discussed current consumer and medical interest in extended hormonal contraceptives to reduce or eliminate menstruation (cycle-stopping contraception). A number of research papers on this topic were presented. It is the position of the Society that menstruation is not a disease, and that further research on the potential health risks and long-term safety of cycle-stopping contraception is still needed.

In the four years since our last position statement calling for further research, more studies have become available on endometrial safety and on patterns of unexpected and expected bleeding. Long-term studies that address potential risks beyond the uterus, such as breast, bone, and cardiovascular health are still needed. Furthermore, there is an urgent need for studies that address impacts on adolescent development, since young women and girls are a target audience for cycle-stopping contraceptives. It is also important to address the social, psychological, and cultural implications of menstrual suppression, as well as the biomedical effects.

It is important to note that cycle-stopping contraceptives do not only reduce or eliminate menstrual bleeding, but also suppress the complex hormonal interplay of the menstrual cycle. The impacts of this cycle on women's health are not completely understood.

We remain concerned that campaigns used to market cycle-stopping contraception depict the menstrual cycle as abnormal, undesirable, unnecessary and even unhealthy.

Messages that women's natural functions are defective or need to be medically controlled can lead to negative body image, especially in young women.

Arguments for cycle-stopping contraception often describe debilitating menstrual cramps and heavy flow as indications, but promote routine use by all women who would prefer not to menstruate for matters of convenience. While we recognize that cycle-stopping contraception may be useful for some medical conditions (such as severe endometriosis), we caution against its use as "a lifestyle choice" until safety is firmly established. Historically, nasty surprises with hormonal therapies for women (e.g., heart disease and hormone therapy for menopausal women, the link between oral contraceptives and blood clots, DES and various health problems) have taken many years to surface. Additionally, when any medication is evaluated for healthy women, the potential risks should be weighed more heavily than in situations when medication is considered to treat a disease. Menstruation is not a disease.

Finally, some have claimed that women should be "free" to choose cycle stopping contraception. But we firmly believe that authentic choice is only possible when accurate and comprehensive information is widely available.

**ABOUT THE SOCIETY FOR MENSTRUAL CYCLE RESEARCH**: The Society for Menstrual Cycle Research is a nonprofit, interdisciplinary research organization. Our membership includes researchers in the social and health sciences, humanities scholars, health care providers, policy makers, and students with interests in the role of the menstrual cycle in women's health and well-being.

For more information, please visit <a href="http://www.menstruationresearch.org/">http://www.menstruationresearch.org/</a>

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