

2-114

Implantable birth control offered free to Iowa women

Planned Parenthood expects to give away 1,400 of the devices, which can last years.

By **TONY LEYS**
tleys@dmreg.com

Free, implantable birth-control devices are being offered to women throughout Iowa, paid for through a multimillion-dollar project financed by an anonymous donor.

Women can choose intrauterine devices, known as IUDs, or Implanon, a matchstick-size hormone-releasing device that is put into the upper arm.

The devices can last several years. Unlike birth-control pills or patches, they don't require women to remember to take any action.

"You are much less likely to have an unintended pregnancy. That's the real upside," said Penny Dickey, Planned Parenthood of

Greater Iowa's chief operating officer.

Planned Parenthood branches around Iowa expect to give away about 1,400 of the devices in the next year. The agencies will bill patients' insurance if they have coverage, but won't charge people who have no insurance, Dickey said. The offer, worth several hundred dollars, includes the cost of having a medical professional insert the device and remove it if a patient decides she wants to get pregnant.

Visiting Nurse Services in Des Moines is making a similar offer. Vice President Keri Lebeda Townsend said the agency has seen an increase in requests for help with birth control.

"Some women have been laid off or maybe they're working part time and they don't have insurance," Townsend said.

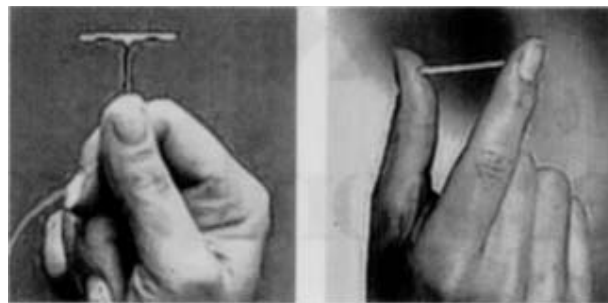
The offer, which started last year, is financed by an

anonymous donation coordinated by the Iowa Initiative to Reduce Unintended Pregnancies, a group led by former Iowa First Lady Christie Vilsack. The group also finances other forms of birth control.

Like many things in medicine, the devices do have possible side effects, which can include cramping or other menstrual issues, and they offer no protection against sexually transmitted diseases.

Dickey, the Planned Parenthood leader, said her agency encourages women to use the implantable devices only if they want to put off pregnancy for several years. Although the effects of the devices are easily reversible, she said, the agency doesn't want to spend several hundred dollars on a long-term form of birth control if the patient plans to stop using it quickly.

Des Moines Register
Des Moines, IA
Circ. 151448
From Page:
2B
3/28/2009
43647



PHOTOS SPECIAL TO THE REGISTER

Intrauterine devices, or IUDs, and Implanon are two types of birth control that can last several years. An anonymous donor is financing a project that offers women the ability to receive the devices for free.

Where to find implants

Several agencies around Iowa are using grants to offer free birth control. For a list of agencies, go to www.iowainitiative.org or call (515) 282-5375.

Planned Parenthood of Greater Iowa is one of the agencies making the offer. To find a clinic, go to www.plannedparenthood.org/greater-iowa or call (877) 811-7526.

Visiting Nurse Services in Des Moines also is making the offer. Go to www.venusfamilyplanning.org or call (515) 558-9585.