

Adapted from *Time*, April 28, 1997; 149(17):66.

Michelle Crider, 28, was speechless. The pharmacist had just said, "No." The married mother of a two-year-old daughter, Crider was concerned that she might become pregnant after having intercourse with her husband. She called her doctor, who prescribed a so-called morning-after formula: four birth-control pills... Then the doctor called Crider back: the pharmacy manager at [the pharmacy] had refused to fill the order, citing his moral beliefs.

The pharmacist, JB, had support. [The state's pharmacist association had recently] adopted a policy allowing pharmacists to refuse to fill prescriptions based on "ethical, moral or religious grounds.... We supported this pharmacist's action. A pharmacist has a right to his moral beliefs. Did he do anything to interfere with a patient's care? In this case, relatively, no."

Crider's doctor eventually had the prescription filled at a [competing] pharmacy. Still, Crider was enraged. "I'm no activist," says the former health-clinic employee. "But this was outrageous. I've had difficult pregnancies, and I wasn't ready to get pregnant again. This was a legitimate, legal prescription. Imagine if a woman who was raped had this experience. Is a pharmacist supposed to preach religion?"

[The pharmacy] has reprimanded the pharmacist. Says [the] spokesman ...: "Our policy is that a pharmacist, if he has moral objections, should refer the prescription to another on-duty pharmacist, or to another [store in the chain] or to a competing pharmacy, if necessary."

Note: see CA SB 644 (effective 1/1/2006) for California requirements.

