

Self exams clear mystique

By KATHY CRAFT
Of the Emerald

Referral center aims to remove female puzzles

In a crowded room on the second floor of a Eugene church, a young woman with chin-length blonde hair, clad only in a sweater and knee socks, relaxed in a red beanbag chair, a mirror in her hands, a plastic speculum between her legs. Before her 30 women in pantsuits, in patched jeans, from 18 to the far side of 40, took turns kneeling on the floor aiming a flashlight through the opening in the speculum to glimpse something virtually all females own but few ever see — a cervix.

All were participants in the woman to woman workshop sponsored by the University's Women's Resource and Referral Center (WRRC) Saturday.

Many women, of course, have absolutely no desire to see their cervixes. Even Sue Weston, the leader of the health care seminar at the WRRC workshop admitted that when she first learned of self-examination she thought "it was just another idea dreamt up by those crazy women in Berkeley." But then, after she began examining herself regularly, she realized self-examination "helps you grow more in touch with your body" as well as monitor your health in a variety of ways.

Through self-examination, according to Weston, it is possible for a woman to determine when she is ovulating (the basis of most "natural" birth control techniques) as well as when her menstrual period is about to begin. Certain women, she said, maintain they can determine when they are pregnant through observing the cervix

long before any pregnancy test is feasible. "Supposedly it turns blue — but being as I've never been pregnant, I'm not positive on that," Weston laughed.

It's also possible, Weston said, to detect a vaginal infection in its early stages through observing the cervix regularly. And treatment at this point, she added, will often prevent a full-blown infection later. But self-examination is not a means of diagnosis, Weston emphasized. A laboratory test is necessary to determine the exact kind of infection present, she explained. And Weston added that women need to exercise care in applying home and herbal remedies for vaginal infections. "Yogurt is good for a yeast infection, for example, but won't help a bacterial infection at all," she pointed out.

For a woman to examine her cervix, she needs a mirror, a light, and a speculum. (Plastic speculums are available from the University Student Health Center for one dollar each.) At first, according to Weston, it is best for a friend to help with the examination, for it's difficult to juggle the mirror, the light and the speculum all at once. "I usually hold the mirror between my feet," Weston said.

Although self-examination is far from new (it was pioneered by women at the Los Angeles Feminist Women's Health Center almost five years ago), it is still considered radical by many. It definitely strips the gynecologist of a

great deal of his mystique, according to most self-examination advocates.

"Women who've inserted a speculum and seen their cervix just don't view the doctor with that same combination of awe and fear so many other women do," explained one woman who views her cervix regularly. Weston agrees, and adds that self-examination helps women feel more comfortable when they see a doctor.

"You know what's happening to you on that table — and you know when you're getting slipshod service," she said. "They see your cervix once a year. You'll see it a lot more than that," Weston pointed out.

The WRRC is currently sponsoring an on-going class in self-examination techniques and openings are still available. Women interested in learning about self-examination are encouraged to call the WRRC, 686-3327, for further details.

African representative speaks on Zimbabwe

Kumbirai Kangai, a representative of the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) in the United States, will speak tonight at 7:30 in Room 167, EMU. Kangai, based in San Francisco, is in Eugene on the first leg of a Northwest tour. In tonight's lecture he will speak on "The Liberation Struggle in Zimbabwe."

ZANU is a political organization which has led the struggle against white minority rule in Zimbabwe (Rhodesia) for over 10 years. At the recent Geneva Conference on Rhodesia, ZANU joined with another political organization, ZAPU, to form the "Patriotic Front" for the negotiations.

ZANU has carried on an increasingly successful guerilla war against the white settler regime of Ian Smith for the past several years. Many Rhodesia-watchers concede it is ZANU's success which forced Smith to the negotiating table.

Kangai says he is anxious to speak with as many Americans as possible about the situation in Zimbabwe. "This is a critical period for my country," Kangai says.

Kangai will talk about the involvement of the United States in Zimbabwe, the Kissinger peace plan and how Americans can support the people of Zimbabwe.

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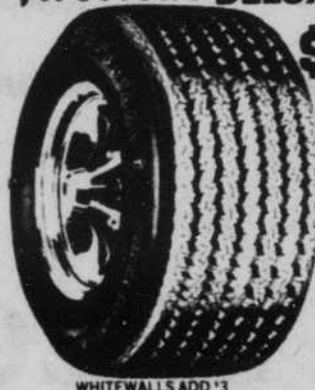
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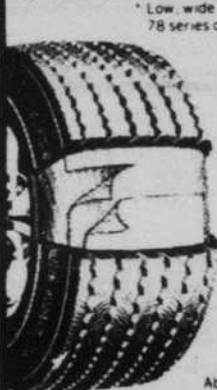


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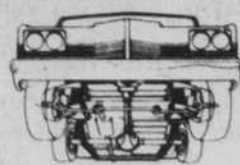
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