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NORPLANT

Continued from Page 1

done under local anesthetic in a doctor's office. The implants should be put in on a day during the woman's menstrual period.

Once implanted, the capsules release small dosages of the hormone progesterone, which will block ovulation, ultimately protecting the user from pregnancy for five full years.

The method is reversible, however. At any point in the five-year period, the implants can be removed and fertility restored within a month or two.

Norplant is the first highly successful birth control method that requires no action on the part of the user except to sit through the initial surgery, which doctors and birth control advocates regard as a breakthrough.

"It takes hard work to be good at birth control," said Susan Trezona, certified nurse-midwife at Women's Care Associates, a Eugene clinic that will be carrying Norplant after March training sessions.

"Norplant is great because you don't have to think about it every day," she said. "You have the surgery and then you're protected for five years."

Norplant is more than 99 percent effective, comparable only to the birth control pill. The difference is that to get that kind of effectiveness from the pill, the user must remember to take the medication at the same time every day. With Norplant, once the capsules have been implanted, the user need not do anything for five years.

"You would not believe the mistakes people make with the pill," said Cheryl Long, health educator at Planned Parenthood, a national agency that is currently considering the prospect of implanting the new contraceptive.

"The biggest problem is user-failure, but with Norplant it's not something she'll have to deal with every day of her life," Long said. "We think college women will think this is great."

After 20 years of research in about 46 countries, medical of-

ficials have concluded that anyone who is eligible to take the pill will most likely be eligible to receive Norplant implants.

"We'll check for people with a history or symptoms of things like acute liver disease, jaundice, vaginal bleeding, blood clots in the legs, lungs or eyes, stroke, chest pain and/or heart attack," said Judy Anderson, Planned Parenthood nurse practitioner. "These are the same things we look out for when prescribing the pill."

Norplant offers another advantage as compared with the pill. Since Norplant consists of one hormone, whereas the pill utilizes two, the user will probably not experience the headaches, bloating and weight gain that are commonly associated with pill use, Trezona said.

"Those are estrogen-related side effects, and Norplant is strictly a progesterone implant," she said.

There is yet one more advantage associated with Norplant. For a five-year supply of birth control pills, the user would be faced with a bill of approximately \$400, if not more. Over the long haul, therefore, Norplant will be more cost-effective.

"Overall, this method seems to be bypassing a lot of problems," Long said.

But Norplant does have its own set of side effects, the most notable of which is irregular bleeding. The user may experience longer-than-normal periods, no periods at all, more than one period in one month or mid-cycle spotting.

"Norplant is going to be a good option, but there is a significant incidence of irregular bleeding," DeVisser said. "The irregular bleeding is a nuisance, but it usually resolves itself after the first six months."

Another side effect is the dual visibility of the implants. First, the initial implanting surgery will leave a 1/4-inch scar. Secondly, because the implants are placed directly under the skin, there is a chance that they will push the skin outward, leaving what will appear as a lump on the upper arm.

Yet another aspect to consider is that Norplant appears to be most effective in women weighing 150 pounds or less. "That's an issue that's related to the absorption of the progesterone," Anderson said.

The last, and obvious problem with Norplant is that it does not protect against sexually transmitted diseases. The user will therefore have to look to another contraceptive method if disease poses a threat.

"Overall, there is no one perfect contraceptive method, but we're hoping for the success of Norplant," Long said.

All in all, the advantages appear to outnumber the disadvantages.

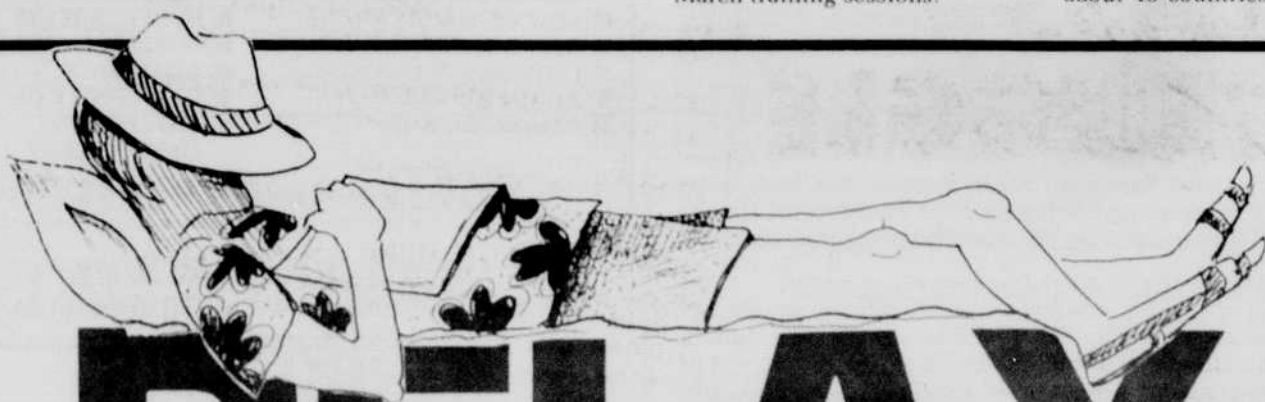
"This is not the answer for everyone, but it will sure serve a good group of people," Trezona said.

Medical professionals predict that this will be the chosen birth control method among college women, women spacing their families, and women who have had their families but do not wish to do anything as drastic as having a tubal ligation.

"I think there's a real place for this," DeVisser said.

Anyone who is interested and would like further information may contact the Student Health Center at 346-4441.

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