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Abortion

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providers to decide whether or not to offer it.

Locally, neither All Women's Health Services — which offers abortion services — nor Planned Parenthood plans to offer RU 486, though they aren't ruling out the possibility.

"We would certainly hope to work with physicians in this community so they would provide this option to their clients," said state Rep. Kitty Piercy, D-Eugene, who is also a Planned Parenthood spokeswoman. "But if others don't step up in offering RU 486, we will keep our options open."

Piercy noted that the Salem branch of Planned Parenthood will be offering clients the option of using RU 486.

Anti-abortion organizations say they will continue fighting RU 486, hoping to slow its use in America and promote alternatives, such as adoption, said Gayle Atteberry, executive director of Right to Life in Salem.

"Even though RU 486 is an earlier method of abortion, in every RU 486 abortion procedure an unborn child with a beating heart dies," Atteberry said.

Lisa Foisy, University Women's Center director, maintains that the pill will give women the choice to do what is right for them by offering another option.

"I think it's great [that RU 486 has] been legalized and offers a great opportunity for women who are in need of birth control," she said.

But anti-abortion supporters argue that regardless of choices, the abortion pill won't resolve the emotional trauma women experience when terminating a pregnancy.

"One reason we are against abortion is we know for many women, abortion is not a satisfactory answer to an unexpected pregnancy," Atteberry said. "It is not the external pressure that makes a woman feel sad about having an abortion, it is the internal. Even with the RU 486, she will feel that sadness."

Research conducted by the University's Center for Study of Women in Society shows otherwise: One of the attractions of the abortion pill was that women felt it was more like a natural miscarriage.

According to a poll of 286 women conducted by Harvey, 89 percent of women who used RU 486 said they were very satisfied or satisfied with the results, and 94 percent said they

would recommend the drug to a friend or family member. Judging by those numbers, medical abortions will become more common, Harvey said.

Though RU 486 has been commonly used in France since 1988, the drug was met with resistance by the Bush administration in 1989. In 1993, President Clinton lifted the ban on the pill, but it took nearly eight years for the FDA to legalize RU 486 because of problems finding a manufacturer and resistance from anti-abortion organizations.

Roussel Uclaf, the French company that developed mifepristone, dodged entering the American market for fear of anti-abortion protests and boycotts of their other products. Instead, the company donated rights to the drug to a nonprofit research organization called Population Council, based in New York City. The Population Council licensed distribution and manufacturing of RU 486 to Danco Laboratories LLC, a company specifically created to produce the drug.

"I'm sure for some providers this will be an obstacle," Harvey said, "but there are others who like to provide all the reproductive health care services for the patients."

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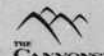
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