

# COMMENTARY

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Tuesday, October 22, 2002

## Editorial

### FDA must be popping pills: Yellow Jacket ban nonsensical

Sometimes, you can't win. Xoch Linnebank, a promoter of herbal supplements based in the Netherlands, was sent a "cease and desist" e-mail Oct. 4 by the Food and Drug Administration, requesting that he halt selling the popular "Yellow Jacket" or "Herbal XTC" herbal pep pills.

These pills use a variety of herbs, including the stimulant ephedra, or ma huang, and caffeine. The FDA ordered the halt due to Linnebank's assertion that the herbs were alternatives to illegal street drugs.

From now on, the letter states, any shipments of Yellow Jacket pills can be stopped, seized and destroyed at the border by U.S. Customs agents.

The logic worries us. The crackdown has been initiated for the way that the supplements are being marketed, not for their contents.

Ephedra, although there have been concerns about its effect on the heart, is legal to purchase or consume in the United States. Yellow Jackets are even sold at convenience stores.

Instead, the concern is that the supplement is marketed as an alternative to street drugs. It is mystifying that the FDA would be opposed to people being steered away from cocaine or marijuana or ecstasy, and onto pills that are legal.

Do they want club kids to prefer the real MDMA, an illegal "designer drug," to a collection of herbs and caffeinated kola nut — which is similar to what's included in a can of Coca-Cola?

Further, what of retailers who sell other ephedra-based products that are not marketed "as alternatives to drugs"? Are these supplements OK simply because four magic words are not used in the marketing pitch?

This restriction on an otherwise legal product is illogical and unwise. We see daily that demonization of drugs doesn't work to stop people from using them.

If the FDA has proof that ephedra is dangerous, then they should be telling Americans and stopping sales of all ephedra-based supplements. But this is a ridiculous battle to pick just over words.

## Editorial policy

This editorial represents the opinion of the Emerald editorial board. Responses can be sent to letters@dailyemerald.com. Letters to the editor and guest commentaries are encouraged. Letters are limited to 250 words and guest commentaries to 550 words. Authors are limited to one submission per calendar month. Submission must include phone number and address for verification. The Emerald reserves the right to edit for space, grammar and style.

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## The paralyzing truth about beauty

In a culture obsessed with retaining beauty indefinitely, a new craze has swept the country. As seen on television commercials or in advertisements run in such publications as People and InStyle magazines, Botox is touted as the new miracle wrinkle eraser. The advertisements, targeting 28- to 65-year-old females, sell the idea of wrinkles disappearing before your very eyes.



Kate Petersen  
 In other words

Recently, the Food and Drug Administration has required Allergan, the company that manufactures Botox, to pull their ads. The FDA says that the advertisements are misleading because they fail to mention the fact that the treatments are temporary.

People using Botox are going to great lengths to improve the way they look. Is potentially harming your body worth the temporary benefit of something as drastic as injecting poisons into your face? Botox is said to be the beauty treatment of the future. What happens if the approximately 1.6 million people who were injected with Botox last year find out that it was detrimental to their health?

The FDA approved Botox in April for the temporary relief of wrinkles. Produced from the same toxins that cause the food poisoning known as botulism, Botox works by freezing the muscles in which the drug is injected. The theory behind Botox is a muscle that cannot move, cannot wrinkle. So, rather than actually getting rid of the wrinkle, the treatment renders the facial muscles immobile.

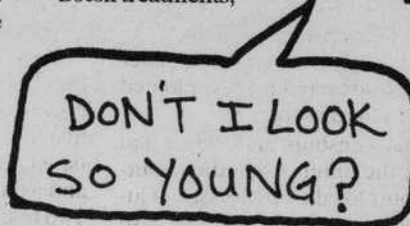
According to the American Society for Aesthetic Plastic Surgery, Botox injections are the fastest-growing cosmetic procedure in the industry. More than 1.6 million people received injections in 2001. This number is 46 percent higher than the previous year.

A new, more controversial, way to administer the Botox treatments is in the form of "Botox parties." These parties entail a group of people in a home, appetizers, maybe some wine, and most importantly, a doctor willing to perform the surgical procedure in a non-sterile environment. Social surgery? Seems quite inappropriate and dangerous to me.

It seems as though history has established that "miracle drugs" are not really

as miraculous as they seem. Once thought of as a miracle weight loss drug, ephedra (ma huang), the active ingredient in many weight loss products, may be unsafe. The FDA reported that products containing ephedra have caused several illnesses including heart attacks, seizures, strokes and even death.

Botox treatments,



among other cosmetic surgical procedures, show that American society is severely, and maybe even dangerously, narcissistic. Aging is a natural process, and every human being will eventually get older. Along with the aging process comes certain elements, one of them being wrinkles. Deal with it.

The treatments range anywhere from \$300 to 1,000 per session. Instead of paying such an exorbitant amount of money for a temporary solution to a lifelong problem, why not pay the money for some worthwhile counseling sessions? Self-esteem is priceless, and when a person has enough, I would bet that the need for Botox diminishes.

Rather than get a poison injected into your body, I propose that college-age people, as the next generation to deal with wrinkles, age gracefully without the aid of cosmetic treatments. Instead of having a frozen face, have one laden with wrinkles and feel fine with that.

If the norm does become Botox injections, and American civilization walks the streets with paralyzed faces, then I will be far more wrinkled than the rest.

Refuse to go to great lengths to retain your youth, especially if those lengths could potentially jeopardize your health in the end.

Contact the columnist at kathrynpetersen@dailyemerald.com. Her opinions do not necessarily represent those of the Emerald.

## Letters to the editor

### Incomplete war debate

Conspicuously absent from both the agenda for Tuesday night's teach-in titled "Is War Necessary?" and from the subsequent Emerald coverage thereof is a discussion of the effects of a weapon of mass destruction on a large population center, and of the further consequences for the local, national and global economies of the use of such a weapon.

A discussion of whether war with Iraq is necessary seems highly incomplete without thorough consideration of this crucial aspect, for it is the fear of Saddam Hussein developing a nuclear weapon, and the prospect of his using his existing chemical and biological weapons that is the core of the case for going to war.

To ask the question, "Is war with Iraq necessary?", then ignore this issue and finally conclude war isn't necessary seems like backwards reasoning: Start with the conclusion you want, and then select the facts you'll look at.

Brian Stubbs  
 graduate teaching fellow  
 physics

### Economic injustice prompted a 'panic'

The United States faces a moral crisis created by the gap in living standards between the industrialized North and the global South. I think that at some level of their consciousness, people in the North are aware that their relative economic privilege is completely unjust. They face a moral crisis similar to that of the southern United States at the time of the Civil War.

Slave owners in the southern states lived in fear that their slaves might rise up and slaughter them. They could not consider abolishing slavery, because their privilege outweighed their fear. Some sort of disturbance might cause whites in part or all of the southern states to fly into what Kenneth M. Stampp, in his book, "The Peculiar Institution," calls an "insurrection panic."

I think that what we saw in the United States after Sept. 11, 2001, was an insurrection panic. People in the United States saw the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon as the Global South, racialized as people of color, rising up against them. Personally, I did not see the Sept. 11 attacks as a threat to myself — I guess I'm one of the slaves.

Milton Takei  
 Class of '92