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COMMENTARY

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EDITORIAL

Condom plan a good idea; needs more work, thought

The Students for Choice group's new plan to implement a campaign bringing free condoms to the residence halls may, on its face, seem like a reasonable or even necessary undertaking. After all, easy access to birth control can be a problem for young adults entering a collegiate atmosphere — probably one much less inhibited than the one they've grown up in — and as a result, unwanted pregnancy can occur. For this reason, we fully endorse the idea that birth control should be widely available and distributed for free on college campuses.

But several issues involved in providing free condoms in the residence halls must be clearly reasoned and rationally planned before any conceived policy is implemented.

First, members of Students for Choice said they want to provide the free condoms "discreetly" in the residence halls so that students too embarrassed to get them at the University Health Center don't forgo them altogether and practice unsafe sex. We question this hand-holding stance on sex, however. If students aren't mature enough — or are too lazy — to ask for condoms in person, then perhaps they should rethink whether they're mature enough to have sex. The health center is located in a central location on campus and is only a short distance from residence halls. Likewise, Planned Parenthood, which also distributes free condoms, is located off campus at 1670 High St.

Second, a funding problem has already manifested itself, and we can safely assume that it will become a deeper issue in the future, especially if freshmen abuse the service. While Students for Choice hasn't yet figured out how it will pay for free condoms in the residence halls, one thing is for sure: Student fees should not be part of the equation. Any hint of student funding should outrage a great majority of the student body; the proposal would only benefit those in the residence halls but could potentially cost all fee-paying students money.

Third, we would hope Students for Choice can think of a good way to keep freshmen from abusing the privilege of having access to free condoms. One good way to ensure that condoms are not stolen in large quantities and used as water balloons is to install pay dispensers in the bathrooms. This both eliminates the chance of abuse and solves the funding problem. Even a small price — a quarter, or even a dime — could curb the possibility for mistreatment.

With such a high rate of unwanted pregnancy in the United States — four in ten pregnancies, according to Planned Parenthood — we certainly recognize the importance of starting early prevention. But some programs aimed at curbing the problem should be analyzed for cost effectiveness and sensibility before implementation, and the newest proposal by Students for Choice, while commendable, is no exception.

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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Bitter pills

A recent issue of the glorious Emerald insert, Sports Illustrated On Campus, listed the best jobs in college sports. More interesting was a story the next week on the worst jobs in college sports, like "hockey team manager" and "assistant video coordinator."

But that second list ignored "Washington Athletics Director."

As the Ducks ready to play the Huskies this weekend, turmoil is raging like the Great Seattle Fire on the banks of Lake Union. After the Rick Neuheisel betting scandal last spring, Washington Athletics Director Barbara Hedges is in trouble again because of Dr. William Scheyer, a 75-year-old consulting physician with the Huskies who has been distributing banned prescription drugs to Washington athletes for almost 20 years.

This goes far deeper than a ha-ha, Huck-you-Fuskies, Northwest rivalry story. This is a cautionary tale for all athletics departments that get too fat for their football uniforms. It's a scary, real example of what can happen when you take out one block from the Jenga tower that is a big-time athletics department. Once one block falls, the rest of the structure comes down with it.

In early October, Washington fired Scheyer, and on Oct. 17, the Washington state medical board revoked Scheyer's medical license for issuing thousands of pills to Huskies athletes during a 17-year period. Scheyer circumvented Washington procedures by opening his own accounts at local pharmacies and paying for the drugs himself.

Scheyer distributed the pills on team planes or after athletic events. Why? We may never know. Maybe because he wanted to be liked, maybe because he really thought he was helping athletes.

The drugs included stimulants like Ritalin, topical steroids and painkillers like Vicodin and Endocet. All are illegal in the eyes of the NCAA, which has demanded that the Washington athletics department take action in this case. The Huskies are currently conducting an internal investigation.

The real issue is how Scheyer pulled a



Eric Layton Illustration

ski cap over the eyes of the athletics department for so long. What he did was one step short of ramming steroid-packed needles into players, but he survived for almost two decades. He wasn't on the Washington sports medicine staff and ran his own, legitimate prac-



Peter Hockaday

Today is Hockaday

He consulted mostly with the non-revenue sports and was head physician for the softball team.

Those are excuses, and they're as weak as light beer. The Huskies have no concrete drug-testing procedure, which would have found traces of the drugs in athletes. The athletics department never knew about "UW" accounts at local pharmacies. Hedges, who suspected Scheyer enough to demote him from softball "head physician" to "volunteer physician" in 2001, never really delved into complaints made about Scheyer by other sports-medicine staffers.

The system of checks and balances at Washington checked nothing and balanced only Scheyer's checkbook. He

slipped through the cracks like water on a Seattle pier.

For years, Washington has been a model for other athletics departments. The Huskies always had a strong blueprint for how to build a football team, a strong women's soccer team or a lightning-fast crew team.

Now, the Washington athletics department gives others, like Oregon, an anti-blueprint of how not to run this Pacific-10 Conference show. The Oregon athletics department needs to study the Scheyer case like a chemistry student studies a textbook.

This is the most important memo: Don't let this happen here. Seal the cracks, if they exist. The Washington athletics department is going down like the RMS Lusitania, and I don't want the Oregon athletics department to be the Titanic.

It's a double-edged sword sharper than anything in "Kill Bill: Volume 1." We've asked to be linked with the image of the athletics department because it's a sleek, Nike-designed image. But if anything happens to that image, our school is tarnished along with our athletics program.

Because for Hedges, the Washington athletics department and the University of Washington itself, no amount of Vicodin can ease the pain of the last year.

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

Event meant to 'balance the scales'

Sponsors of the "Peace, Justice & Media Conference" on campus a week ago are not victims of a cheap shot in the Emerald's Oct. 13 editorial ("Conference mocks goals, loses purpose in hypocrisy").

Rather, what was at work was a misunderstanding by editors of what constituted the event's stated goal — "Empowering the Movement for Fair, Accurate and Diverse Media."

The editorial did not complain about presentations failing to be "fair and accurate." Instead, its concern was absence of diverse points of view to counter what it saw, correctly, as the liberal orientation of the conference. That is what it was supposed to be — a chance to expose liberal perspectives too seldom heard in a media environment held hostage.

I moderated two Saturday morning broadcasting panels whose participants freely identified themselves as progressive with liberal views. They did not pursue any vendetta against the reality of a

national right-wing monopoly of talk radio, even though two major Eugene stations, KPNW and KUGN, have a preponderance of right-wing attack shows on their AM bands daily.

The focus in these panels, as throughout the conference, was on the need for balance in commercial broadcasting and how to achieve it. This is a perspective rarely heard in the mass media, especially in commercial broadcasting whose owners and managers are part of a corporate structure that obstructs balance in electronic news coverage. To have heard that power structure describe the conference as "leftist — if not counterculture" would be consistent with its unbalanced reality. For the Emerald to use those inaccurate terms is a surprise.

I take responsibility for and regret any inconvenience caused to commentator Lars Larson, which appears to be what energized the editorial.

I tried to make first contact with participants by e-mail, then tried to follow up by telephone. My phone contact with Larson was late. He could not attend and resented a published notice that he was

among invitees.

I've had personal experience with Larson as an invited guest on his radio show. Angered by something I asked, he hung up on me. Bad manners, but no big deal. Then he told his audience: I'm going to give you Beres' phone number, and you can tie up his phone the rest of the day to teach him a lesson. Ugly manners. Also bad business.

Contrary to the editorial's assumption, having KUGN's Don Carlin on the panel was no attempt at "political diversity." He is a balanced broadcast personality.

Were the conference a political rally, or a debate, two sides addressing every question would have been essential. It was neither, but still invaluable for democracy. Considering how rarely the liberal view is heard in broadcast media held captive to conservatism, the event was just one small, evenhanded effort to start to balance the scales.

George Beres, a former University sports information director and a planner of the Peace, Justice & Media Conference, lives in Eugene.