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EDITORIAL

Anti-Plan B crusaders should see value of pill

Anti-abortion activists in this day and age bring startling new meaning to wanting their cake and eating it, too.

Case in point: They don't want women to have abortions, and they don't want women to have access to pills taken after sexual intercourse that can prevent — not terminate — a pregnancy.

Well, then, what the hell *do* they want? People to stop having sex?

A wonderful vignette that illustrates this conflict played out last month in the great state of Texas. It is a frightening and tragic epic of ignorance, misplaced religious conviction and downright stupidity.

And it all started with a rape victim.

The victim — whose name was withheld from print, as is the policy with rape victims at most newspapers, including the Emerald — obtained a prescription from an emergency-room doctor for the Plan B pill, commonly called the "morning-after pill," hours after being raped. After three pharmacies sent her away because they were "out of stock" (and we all know the morning-after pill is in such high demand), she arrived at an Eckerd store.

Enter our story's antagonist, the Texan pharmacist Gene Herr, who is just a few cows short of a cattle ranch.

What happened next was articulated best in a Feb. 27 column by The Boston Globe's Ellen Goodman. According to Goodman, when the rape victim handed her prescription over, the pharmacist "took (the prescription) in the back room, prayed, called his pastor and then refused to fill it on 'moral grounds.'" Twenty-five minutes later, Herr came back to the window and informed her of the bad news.

For those who are confused, let's review — again. What does the Plan B pill do? Prevent pregnancy. What doesn't it do? Induce abortion. What specific part of the female interior does the Plan B pill *not* affect? The fetus. Why is this such a hard concept? Who knows?

The morning-after pill is, in essence, a mega dose of birth control pills that, judging from the name, controls the possibility of a pregnancy, but that's just a guess. It's not like these facts aren't widely documented or anything.

Of course, the pharmacist's moral problem might have stemmed from the other common argument among conservative groups that the morning-after pill will drive poor, innocent teenagers to sex, drugs and rock 'n' roll. As if teenage girls will wake up one morning and think, "Gee, now that I can go get a morning-after pill — as opposed to taking my regular pill, which is more effective — I think I'll go out and have massive amounts of casual sex with a parade of nameless strangers in bad neighborhoods!" It's a good thing abstinence-only education is being pushed so hard these days so that teenagers won't know how to protect themselves from sexually transmitted diseases while they pop Plan B pills like M&Ms.

But wait! According to The New York Times, which may or may not be concealing the liberal media agenda of impregnating the entire female teenage population, the teen pregnancy rate "... has fallen steadily for a decade with little fanfare, to below any level previously recorded in the United States." Holy contradiction, Batman! I guess the Plan B pill and prevention-based education really *are* good for something.

In an Emerald article published in January, Oregon Right to Life Executive Director Gayle Atteberry said the group opposes the Plan B pill only when it prevents a fertilized female egg from planting itself in the womb (which she considers an abortion). But what Atteberry was thinking about was more like RU-486, an FDA-approved abortion pill that, according to an article in The Detroit News, "stops a fertilized egg from adhering to the uterus and induces contractions to expel the embryo."

The Plan B pill, on the other hand, reduces the risk of pregnancy by inhibiting fertilization of the egg, according to Planned Parenthood. In short, Plan B works to stop fertilization in the first place, whereas abortion methods terminate fertilization.

It's really not a hard concept to grasp. But the misinformation distributed by anti-abortion groups serves to deceive the public into thinking that legitimate birth control methods, particularly for rape victims, are forms of abortion. And this is quickly sending the anti-abortion movement's credibility crashing down, much like the since-fired Texan pharmacist's day job.



Eric Layton Illustrator

Room for two

It happened.

Over the weekend, two same-sex couples got married in Eugene.

I've looked out my window and am pretty sure the sky didn't fall — well, not any more than it usually does in March. I checked with the U.S. Geological Survey and they assured me that there wasn't any significant earth movement. And if any particular deity was so displeased with Eugene-turned-modern-day-Sodom that he/she/it decided to smite someone, I missed that too.

In fact, the world around me looks pretty much the same.

Of course, not only was I assured the aforementioned activities would take place, I was also told that this would be the ruination of Marriage and The Family.

So, I checked those too.

After 12 years, I'm about as married as they come. Did the weekend nuptials make me feel less married?

Nope. Sorry, but I guess they were wrong on that point too. Perhaps it's unhealthy, but my definition of marriage, my commitment to being married and my sense of being married simply aren't tied up in the goings-on of others.

I didn't feel less married when Anna Nicole married her octogenarian. I didn't feel less married when Dennis Rodman married Carmen Elektra, and I didn't feel less married when "Who Wants to Marry a Millionaire?" hit the air.



Jessica Cole-Hodgkinson
 Huh? What? Really.

If those events didn't change how I feel about my own marriage, then I hardly think Gretchen Miller's marriage to Sarah Hendrickson or Kent Kullby's marriage to Tim Smith are cause for alarm. There's room enough in my heart and my definition of marriage to allow them their joy and their commitment.

So, what about The Family? Well, maybe I'm not the best person to ask. I grew up as the only child of a single parent, so my definition of The Family is already at odds with tradition.

Worse, as I've grown up, I've collected various friends that I now consider part of my family. Without a drop of blood between us, I actually love them in exactly the same way I love those with whom I share my DNA. Can you imagine?

Now, despite all my married years, I haven't taken the time to have children yet. Maybe that's just as well — I mean, what kind of parent will I be?

When junior comes up and says that

his new best friend's dad just married another man, I'm not going to (1) gasp! (2) forbid them to play together, or (3) explain to junior that this is another example of the downfall of our society and he should not ever accept alternative lifestyles as legitimate because they undermine the moral fiber of our society ... I'm afraid I will be too busy searching for just the right Hallmark card for junior to take over on his next visit.

When my daughter comes home and wants to know why she can't have two mommies, just like Heather, I'm probably going to tell her that it is because I chose her other parent based on my preferences — but if the two-mommy thing is important to her, that is an option she can look into for her own children.

Just imagine — I am quite likely to teach my children to accept the choices of those around them. What a waste of a perfectly good opportunity to lay the foundations of intolerance.

Well, who knows, perhaps my biological clock will tick its last ticks before I get around to having kids, and my acceptance of same-sex relationships will not be passed on to contaminate another generation.

Don't hold your breath.

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

ONLINE POLL

Each week, the Emerald publishes the results of the previous poll and the coming week's poll question.

Visit <http://www.dailyemerald.com> to vote.

Last question: Should the Take Back the Night march have separate sections based on gender identity?

Results: 54 votes

- No — Segregation is hypocritical in a march for equal rights: 74.0 percent or 40 votes.

- No — It alienates people trying to support the cause: 20.4 percent or 11 votes.

- Yes — It will help people be more comfortable: 3.7 percent or two votes.

- Yes — It will attract more participants: 1.9 percent or one vote.

This week: Do you support the legalization of same-sex marriage?

Choices: Yes — Marriage is about love, not sexual orientation; Yes — It's an equal-rights issue; No — I support civil unions but not marriage; No — Homosexuality is abnormal.