



Health center must provide condoms for A&M students

AIDS education has become an important part of American university and college campuses since the disease first showed up in the United States, and schools have devised a number of creative ways to inform and protect students from the fatal disease.

Texas A&M is providing education to its students in the form of video tapes on monitors in the A.P. Beutel Health Center, free informational pamphlets and C.A.R.E. Week. It could be doing more.

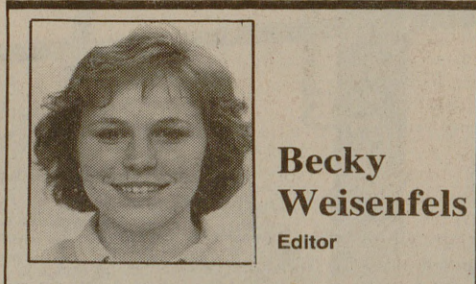
In a story in the Jan. 23 issue of *The Battalion*, Sherry Bell, manager of health education in UT's student health center, said the University of Texas sponsors an "AIDS Awareness Week" and "Safe-Sex Kits" for its students. Several seminars are held throughout the semester, and each student who attends gets a safe-sex kit, which includes a condom.

A&M should have a more aggressive AIDS prevention program that makes condoms available to students at the health center or through on-campus vending machines.

There is absolutely no reason why students should not have this service available in conjunction with more education programs about acquired immune deficiency syndrome. In the Jan. 23 issue of *The Battalion*, then-acting director of the health center, Dr. John Moore, reported some reasons why condoms were not being made available. Each of his reasons has also been a factor at other schools — and those schools still found a way to provide the service.

Moore said one reason condoms are not available is that it is not a necessity — they are already available in grocery stores.

Well, gynecological exams and birth control pills are also available off campus, but the health center provides those things. The center should not be concerned with availability elsewhere, but with the needs and the health of students. Many students do not have an immediately accessible way off campus, and would prefer to just forget about



Becky Weisenfels
Editor

safe sex rather than go through the hassle of making a trip to buy condoms. After all, there is no way that nice person has AIDS.

Is there?

College students are members of one of the most sexually active age groups in the United States. If they are going to have sex, they need to be aware of the risks and have access to a way to reduce those risks.

The University of Colorado makes condoms available to its students through 40 vending machines. The machines sell 800 to 1,000 condoms each month. If there wasn't a need, students wouldn't be buying.

Moore said another reason that the health center does not distribute condoms is that it could "overload the pharmacists."

The University of Nebraska had the same concerns, but officials there came up with a solution. A giant glass fish bowl filled with condoms was placed in the health center, and students were expected to pay on the honor system. Condom sales increased by 10 percent.

I realize that a solution to A&M's problems is not immediately available. The health center does not have a permanent director — just an acting one. But students still should expect and perhaps even demand distribution of condoms along with a more aggressive AIDS education program.

There is a group on campus trying to organize a campaign against AIDS — the University AIDS Committee. The group has drafted a proposal that calls for consulting with AIDS experts, visiting other colleges with successful programs, getting pamphlets and films for

the resource library and providing condoms. However, the presentation of that proposal is still way down the road.

In the meantime, the only way to fight AIDS is to educate ourselves. C.A.R.E. Week ends today, and I hope many people made an effort to attend the sessions that were available. Pamphlets are available at the health center. Books can be bought or checked out of the library.

I once read an article that condemned the comparison between the black plague of Europe and AIDS. The black plague took thousands of lives, and was spread through insect and rodent bites. People had little control over whether they got the disease or not.

AIDS also has taken many lives. But AIDS is spread ONLY through contact with an infected person's body fluids, such as through sex or blood transfusions. Condoms are not a sureproof method against the disease, but they do reduce the risk of getting it. People have some control over whether they get AIDS or not.

People who got the black plague were helpless; people who get AIDS are usually just careless.

Becky Weisenfels is a senior journalism major and editor of The Battalion.

Rape problem can be solved through change in attitudes

Do you ever have the kind of headache that just won't go away, no matter how hard you wish for it to? The kind of headache you get from listening to old Captain and Tennille albums for six hours straight. (I hate it when that happens.) Kind of like Excedrin Headache Case Number 417,392 (which is completely different from Excedrin Headache Case Number 417,391).

Take, for instance, coming to grips with Texas A&M and Brazos County's problem with rape. Admittedly, rape is a problem everywhere, but it just seems to be worse here in our "friendly" atmosphere.

For those of you who don't think there is a problem with rape here I'll share a brief story. While doing research for a story recently, I ran across an item in an October 1983 *Battalion*. The story told of how the mean old National Organization for Women (do I hear hissing?) was protesting a common business practice here in Brazos County.

Those Communist, free-enterprise bashers were demanding that a t-shirt be taken off the shelves of a local store simply because of what was written on the front of the shirt.

Mail Call

'Poachers' create problems

EDITOR:

Aggies don't lie, cheat or steal, but it is disturbing that a small, yet growing number of students (I won't call them Aggies) don't hesitate to park in a lot without having the proper sticker. It is also disturbing that they seem to think they are not violating the Aggie code of honor (or common decency).

They assume that the only inconvenience is to the police officer who has to write out the ticket (if they are caught). It takes quite a few tickets to equal the cost of a sticker; just one more little expense of going to school for those who have the money. Meanwhile, those who have paid for a sticker are forced to park illegally or drive around until someone else leaves the lot. I wish there were parking spaces for everyone, but there aren't, so a parking system was instigated. Bob Wiatt says a sticker is only a license to hunt. But poachers are causing chaos in the system. Come on violators, must your car be towed before you think you've done anything wrong?

W.D. Gardner
Associate Professor
Department of Oceanography

Aggie offers helpful hints

EDITOR:

No, I am not going to complain or criticize anybody. Believe it or not I am just going to present some suggestions.

1. It would be really nice if covered bus stops were built at A&M. If covered bus stops were available, we could stay relatively dry while waiting for a bus on a rainy day. We would also be able to hide from the scorching sun during the summer.

2. Breathing the fumes from diesel buses is not my idea of staying healthy. A simple solution for this would be to weld an "L"-shape tube section to the exhaust pipe of the campus buses. The "L" shape section would redirect the fumes upwards and away from pedestrians. This measure has been adopted by the transit authority where I'm from and it works like a charm.

3. Now one that should hit right at home. The staff of *The Battalion* could conduct research on topics of real interest to students. Although your commentaries and stories about bowheads, television programming and summer vacation adventures are entertaining, they offer no reward for your readers. Maybe you could do a comparison between the prices of textbooks at different bookstores. Such a comparison would stimulate some kind of competition and could bring the prices of books down.

4. Finally, how about asking the MSC to sell Aggie dairy products. Yes, I know that they sell them by the Meat Sciences Building, but who wants to walk all the way over there after lunch just for an ice cream cone? If there is one thing that I can say about Aggie dairy products, it is that they are cheaper and taste better than Blue Bell.

I hope somebody takes this letter seriously enough to implement some of these ideas. If you have ideas of your own I encourage you to make use of your freedom of speech. Together we can make a better University.

Tony Forrest '89

Everyone has rights

EDITOR:

I am writing in reference to Elizabeth Earle's letter on Feb. 9. There are obviously some misunderstandings about what pro-life is all about.

Pro-life is also pro-choice. I believe that all people have the right to choose to continue to live, except for a few hardened criminals who forfeit that right. Are we to deny the unborn, who couldn't possibly have committed any crime, the right to that choice?

Whether or not these people have emerged from the womb is irrelevant. Once conceived, each of them is a unique, separate identity with their own destiny as a person.

I'm all for a woman's right to govern what happens to her body, but what about those women (and men) who are being murdered before birth? What sort of rights do they have to govern what happens to their bodies?

I welcome debate on this issue. It's important for people to take a stand on something this critical. However, debate can continue forever and never arrive at a conclusion. If you want to know the real answer to this problem, why don't you ask God? He'll tell it to you if you just LISTEN.

Richard Bohannon '90

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Steve Masters
Senior Staff Writer

What did it say? "In case of rape — this side up."

That was only five-and-a-half years ago. How can you deal with an attitude that thinks that type of thing is appropriate? It would probably be considered offensive to some of the individuals in prison in Huntsville. But people around here were actually buying and, more disturbing, wearing it.

This shirt was eventually taken off the market, I assume, since it's not available any more. (At least not in the stores where I shop.)

Also, what is the deal with saying a woman asked to be raped?

Picture this hypothetical situation. You're at the Chicken. Some woman walks in wearing a skin-tight outfit. You, being the macho stud that you are (a legend in your own mind), strike up a conversation with her. You are both drinking, but not drunk. Eventually, you kiss her. She doesn't seem to mind. You stagger back to your dorm with her. One thing leads to another, then suddenly to nothing. You're upset and frustrated. She's indifferent.

Question? Has this woman asked to be raped?

If you say yes, it's time to go back to high school. Is there some kind of implied verbal (or physical) contract that someone is going to have sex if she (he) kisses someone? No way!

But this is the argument that defense lawyers often use to save their clients. Immediately after a woman goes public with an allegation of rape, both friends and foes ask questions such as these: "What were you wearing?"; "Were you drinking?"; "Did you do anything to lead him on?"

What difference does it make? Here's a simple rule. If a woman says "no," no matter when, STOP. If she's playing a game, lose her. If she's not, you may have saved both her and yourself a lot of emotional and legal problems that could last for the rest of your lives.

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The Battalion

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