

Options within a choice

Morning-after pill' solidifies line of conception

Columnist



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A world already ruled by convenience has become even more so with the Federal Drug Administration's approval of emergency contraception, better known as the "morning after" pill, last Monday. The pill's approval is unusual because the companies which manufacture birth control never requested its approval for use as emergency contraception, fearing the massive repercussions of litigation and the ire of pro-life groups.

Although companies fear the repercussions of emergency contraception, the FDA's announcement is no more than an official seal on what has been going on for decades in the United States. As such, the FDA's approval should be used to help pro-life and pro-choice groups come to a settlement as to what constitutes life and where the line should be drawn.

Recent bombings of abortion clinics and similar instances constitute right-wing ideology at its best, representing a movement which has lost any semblance of the order it once maintained.

No matter what one's personal views may be, the abortion question is minor in comparison to other issues which impact the lives of those already living.

The approval of emergency contraception simply serves to announce publicly what many women do not realize is available. Although emergency contraception is used regularly in emergency rooms and reproductive health clinics, it is rarely utilized in private practices because doctors know little about its use.

As more individuals become educated, the issue of abortion

Princeton University convinced the FDA that emergency contraception possibly could prevent almost 2 million pregnancies each year that would otherwise end in abortion. If nothing else, this should partly ease the cries of ardent pro-lifers.

For those who aren't responsible enough to plan, emergency

hopefully will fade into the distance as women begin to take advantage of emergency contraception to prevent pregnancy.

Because emergency contraception is nothing more than high doses of birth control, the process is easy and affordable. Women simply take two to four birth control pills up to 72 hours after sex, followed by the same dose exactly 12 hours later.

A survey conducted by the Kaiser Family Foundation showed an estimated 225,000 American women have used emergency contraception. Likewise, a newly-established hot line received over 25,000 calls within five months of its inception. The hot line was established to inform women about the process and familiarize them with the providers of emergency contraception.

As of yet, no specific products have been approved and labeled, although emergency contraception has been used extensively for two decades.

Although the use of emergency contraception might raise a furor, it has been quieter than its distant relative RU-486. While emergency contraception simply prevents a fertilized egg from implanting in the uterus, RU-486 is an abortion pill which expels an already-growing embryo from the uterus.

The difference between the pills is precisely what should serve as the point of compromise between pro-lifers and pro-choicers. Because emergency contraceptive pills are not effective if a woman is already pregnant, they easily establish what has been so difficult to pinpoint — the beginning of life.

After conducting extensive research, Dr. James Trussell of

contraception is an easy way out.

While there is no substitute for personal responsibility, emergency contraception provides an alternative to abortion that should not be overlooked.

Adoption provides a satisfying solution

Columnist



John Lemon
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The Battalion Classified Ads are filled with some interesting requests. Job opportunities and medical research studies abound, but few ads are more intriguing than requests for babies.

Recently, couples have been advertising their desire to be adoptive parents around Texas A&M University. These couples offer a legitimate solution for unwanted pregnancies on campus. By opening up their

individuals faced with an unwanted pregnancy they sometimes take desperate measures.

In 1994, Stephanie Moore was convicted of throwing her newborn child down a garbage chute in Mosher hall.

According to Texas Vital Statistics, there were 540 abortions in Brazos County in 1995, 283 performed on women between the ages of 20 and 24, an age group corresponding to college-aged women.

A satisfying but often overlooked option to unwanted pregnancies is adoption. Katy Steinert-Threlkeld, vice president of Public Information for the Gladney Center, a licensed adoption agency located in Fort Worth, said there are more couples wanting to adopt than babies available.

"There are about 1.1 million unplanned pregnancies in the U.S. per year," she said. "Only about 2 percent [of mothers] will place their child with adoptive parents."

The saddest legacy of this statistic is there are many couples who desperately desire to adopt a child, but won't get the chance.

The couples who have been advertising in The Battalion are working through a licensed adoption agency, using an adoption method called "open adoption."

In "open adoption," birth parents communicate with adopting parents. Throughout the adoption process, the needs and wishes of the birth parents are paramount. After the adoption, the birth parents can elect to remain in contact with the child and the adoptive family. This open-style adoption benefits the natural parents by allowing them to choose the family with which they place their baby. Because of the emphasis on the birth parents throughout the adoption process, adoption agencies offer free counseling during and after the pregnancy.

Amy and George are just one couple working with the Gladney Center. They have been advertising in The Battalion for about a month. Amy

said "open adoption" benefits both the natural parents and the child.

"It's better for it (the adoption) to be open because they (the children) don't spend their teenage years worrying who their parents are," she said.

Lucy and John are another couple in contact with the Gladney Center. Lucy said working with a licensed agency protects the natural parents.

"I would say if anyone is considering adoption, make sure they work with someone experienced with adoption and get counseling," she said.

In her quest to adopt, Lucy said she believes she and her husband will provide a stable home for children.

"One of the things John and I have to offer is a real strong marriage," said Lucy. "We're committed for a lifetime."

Perhaps the greatest fear of anyone considering giving up a baby is whether the right decision is being made. Prospective adoptive couples who work with an agency are thoroughly examined before being accepted into the adoption program. This process ensures prospective couples are suitable parents.

Pregnancy should be a positive experience, not a tragedy. Students trapped in an unwanted pregnancy are not limited to the quick fix of abortion or the long haul of raising the child themselves.

By advertising to adopt at A&M, a solution is created which benefits a child in need of a home, birth parents who cannot handle the responsibility of child rearing and individuals looking to adopt. Through "open adoption," students who might not be ready to become parents can ensure a secure future for their children.

The war against abortion will not be won by bombings or death threats. It will be won by mothers who have the courage to consider the best interests of their children and families who have the generosity to accept those children into their homes.



Militant feminism stifles free thinking more than sexism

Columnist



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In an age where the dignity of the individual is cherished above all else, many American women are being misrepresented by an insulting, monolithic feminist movement.

As radical female activists rally for extreme causes, they neglect to tell new recruits that membership in the sisterhood comes with a price — ideological conformity.

Nothing illustrates this myopic vision like the rabid defense and promotion of abortion on demand.

No matter what side of the abortion argument one favors, there's tremendous insight to be gained by examining the stances of such prominent feminist groups as the National Organization for Women. There's also an important question to be answered: Can a person who is pro-life also be a feminist? The answer should be "yes," but the rul-

ing class of feminism is trying to make the two terms incompatible. In the cut-and-dried view of modern American feminism, it's not enough for women to have access to one of the more than 1.5 million surgical abortions each year, nor would it be right to require teenage girls to consult parents or other responsible adults before getting an abortion.

Should people support RU-486? If they're feminists, the answer is "yes." But because one controversial abortion drug might not be enough to guarantee "women's health," activists also lobbied the FDA to advertise "morning-after" pills, which almost any woman can now use to induce a miscarriage.

Still, the party lines of the feminist movement extend far beyond reproductive issues.

For instance, all women should campaign for the right to lesbian marriages. And no feminist could have any doubts about the credibility of Anita Hill's accusations against Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas.

Who would have thought "liberated" women would be compelled to think in such ways about so many controversial issues?

The women at the forefront of the feminist movement seem to be saying, "Don't let the patriarchy tell you what to believe when we can tell you so much better."

Kelly Smith, a member of the Texas A&M chapter of NOW, disagrees.

"There is definitely a place for people who don't agree with our position on every issue. We're not all about abortion," Smith said.

But Smith said that being pro-choice is an essential activity of NOW.

"You need as many groups as possible backing up our right to have an

abortion," Smith said.

Abortion freedoms and lesbian rights have more in common than just the support of the feminist movement; they also are both causes which have both strong and convincing arguments. They also have special interest groups outside of the feminist sphere to champion the issues.

Agenda-setting feminist groups like NOW would do well to focus their considerable political power on issues everyone can agree on, such as equal pay for equal work, the advancement of women's medicine and an end to violence against women.

Pro-choice organizations such as the National Abortion and Reproductive Rights Action League and numerous gay and lesbian groups are more than ready to fight their own battles.

Certainly no one would be surprised to see the more controversial groups share members with groups like NOW. But the current attitude that says all feminists think

alike on issues of life and morality is not just wrong, it's insulting.

In all fairness, feminism isn't the only good idea being overrun by extremists. It's just another example of the polarization of American society, so well illustrated by the assault weapon-toting nuts of the National Rifle Association or even the shock artists of Operation Rescue.

Though one would never hear them admit it, many conventional feminists have a lot in common with these redneck men and clinic-clogging protesters.

The foremothers of American feminism were strong, free-thinking women who set out to change the status quo. Leaders like Susan B. Anthony and Margaret Sanger sought to erase injustices and put men and women on equal social footing.

But the movements they gave birth to have strayed onto a narrow, restrictive path many people do not wish to follow.



MAIL CALL

Yell leader's earn respect, not blame

In response to Mason Jackson's column "Out-dated-traditions in need of evaluation."

I am completely appalled Jackson could even incorporate the yell-leader tradition. First of all, the Citadel incident with women and Shannon Faulkner was based on sexual discrimination; however, the method and manner in which Faulkner approached the issue completely blasted women and their struggle for equality. Secondly, Jackson's column was against "sexism," yet he wants "bouncy" women in "skirts" to

boost the "testosterone levels" of our football players? If you think perky, bouncy cheerleaders are the solution to A&M's football woes, maybe we did not attend the same football games this year.

As Jackson well pointed out, A&M recruits some of the finest athletes for our football program. If most of the players concentrated on the games, then they would not need to "look to the sidelines for added assistance from cheerleaders." If most of the players and coaches focus on the game at hand, then they would not need cheerleaders. It may just be that Jackson enjoys the appeal that cheerleaders bring with their "skirts."

As for me, and most of the student body who are proud of our traditions, yell-leaders do a fine job leading the 12th Man to support the Texas Aggie Football team. The purpose of yell-leaders is to keep the crowd rooting for our team. This is one tradition that I hope will not be challenged because the yell-leaders do their job sufficiently and effectively.

Christi N. Rohan
Class of '98
Accompanied by 4 signatures

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For more details on letter policy, please call 845-3313 and direct your question to the opinion editor.