

Keeping up the good work

A man with the inability to sustain an erection is certainly at a disadvantage for himself and his wife or partner. Impotence is a medical disorder, and although sex is not a necessity, Viagra erection pills should be covered by health insurance.



APRIL TOWERY
columnist

Having hair on one's head is not a necessity, yet oral remedies for baldness are covered. Tallness is not a necessity, but growth hormones or short children are covered. Clear skin is not a necessity, but acne medication is covered.

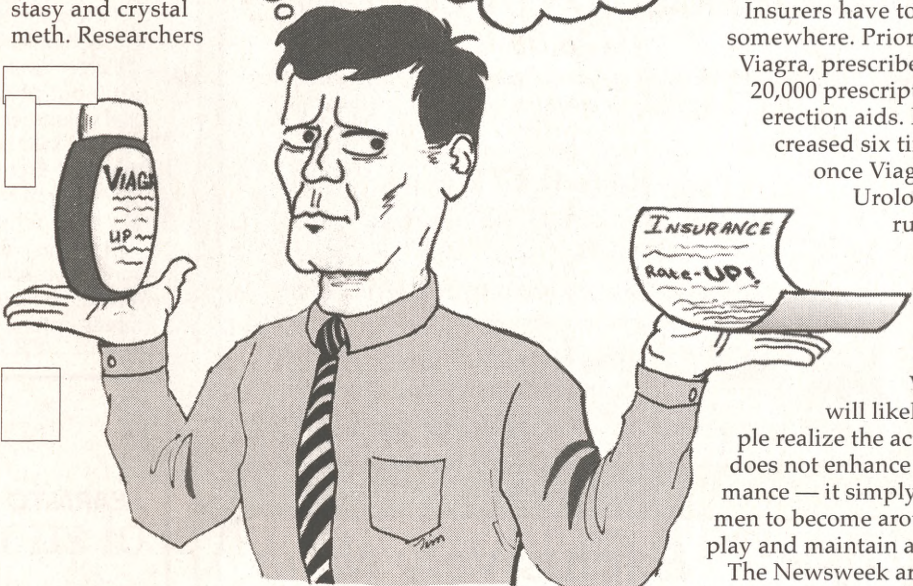
So why not Viagra? Pfizer's potency pill is expensive at \$10 per pill. Without health insurance coverage, couples are hindered from sexually enhancing their relationship and from having children.

According to a May 11 article in Newsweek, managed-care executives are worried about their budgets. Is it right to allow a 65-year-old couple the opportunity to have sex just like they did on their honeymoon, meanwhile denying someone's right prenatal care?

The answer is it must be regulated. As of now, no one is screened for the pill. Someone who is not completely impotent but sexually dissatisfied could qualify to take Viagra.

Users say that taken an hour before sex, it relaxes the blood vessels feeding the penis, enabling it

to respond to erotic stimulation. However, "club kids" in New York have talked of using Viagra to erase the erection-inhibiting effects of disco drugs such as Ecstasy and crystal meth. Researchers



say the drug, however, will not provide this service.

This is what is wrong with Viagra. There is no regulation in who can and cannot take the drug. Women are taking it for various reasons. Even Bob Dole has jumped on the bandwagon and become the virtual Viagra poster boy.

Insurers have to draw the line somewhere. Prior to the release of Viagra, prescribers wrote about 20,000 prescriptions a week for erection aids. Prescriptions increased six times that number once Viagra hit the market.

Urologists are using rubber stamps to keep up with the demand for prescriptions, the Newsweek article stated.

Viagra's popularity will likely decline once people realize the actual effects of it. It does not enhance sexual performance — it simply allows impotent men to become aroused during foreplay and maintain an erection.

The Newsweek article stated the drug has gotten 70 to 80 percent good re-

Health insurance should cover Viagra, the newly-marketed drug which claims to cure impotence

sults from impotent men. Some men may not be affected by it. Others will be turned off by the recent uproar about medical side effects.

Four deaths have been reported related to Viagra. Some patients taking heart medication have supposedly reacted poorly to the drug, which causes them to become "overworked."

People will eventually begin to realize this drug is important enough to be used only by those who really need it. It is not some sort of sex toy to be played with. It is something that should be taken seriously by men who are impotent and their wives or partners.

Others who intend to use the drug to enhance their performance will soon see it doesn't work, and the drug's popularity will decline.

Once the popularity declines a little, managed-care plans should be able to financially deal with the coverage of Viagra.

Insurers should determine who needs coverage based on their level of impotence. Only those who are declared completely impotent should qualify. Dosage per month should be limited as well.

No, sex is not a necessity. But it is an important component of many healthy marriages. If health insurance can cover the luxuries of enhancing appearance with plastic surgery, growth spurt pills and baldness remedies, it can enhance a few relationships.

April Towery is a senior journalism major.

United we stand, divided we fall

Multiculturalism causes societal breakdown

Multiculturalism is thriving in Aggie-land.



NATHAN BOUCHÉR
columnist

There are organizations which serve students ranging from African-Americans to those who wish to show pride in their Confederate heritage. Many students find the opportunity to get acquainted with others who have similar backgrounds or characteristics in these groups and develop a sense of pride based on their identity.

Ten years ago, the Texas A&M Department of Multicultural Services was installed. The department's mission, according to its Web site, is to "help the University develop and train future leaders for an increasingly multicultural society." The question is, are the groups the department champions really forming students into leaders for a multicultural society? The answer is an emphatic no.

The primary problem with this type of system is one of semantics. Am I, for example, a Hispanic-American because there are Mexican branches to both sides of my family tree? If so, why am I not a Czech-American because my paternal grandfather's family emigrated from Czechoslovakia? My last name is French (well, at least Cajun), so would it be correct to say that I am a Mexican-Czech-French-American? No, most certainly would not.

I am an American, plain and simple. I was born in a nation which was formed when members of varying racial, ethnic, religious and social groups fought and died for the protection of their shared dream of liberty. I am not the product of my ancestors' culture. I am the son of a hard-working American family.

Like many others, I feel pride when I hear the stories of my genealogy, and like many others, I am proud of the man I have become. It does not make sense; therefore, for me to base all of my self-worth on being a "white man." For I am not a "white man," but the man of many colors.

I should not be segregated from the African-American simply because the color of my skin is a shade lighter than his, just as he should not be separated from me because he happens to be a shade darker. We

are all human, and we all deserve respect.

Secondly, how do those who believe in multiculturalism, as manifested by the Department of Multicultural Services at A&M, equate separation of cultures through this type of grouping with "training leaders for an increasingly multicultural society?" Is it not more logical to assume that if the students were grouped with members of other cultures, rather than separated from them, they would become more aware of the complexities in dealing with them? Obviously, the answer is yes.

How are we to become sensitive to the needs of the members of the many cultures that make up this nation if we are constantly refused involvement with them through exclusive groupings? I can never be sure how to handle a given situation with someone not of my peer group, so I cannot be held responsible for how my actions may affect individuals outside of it.

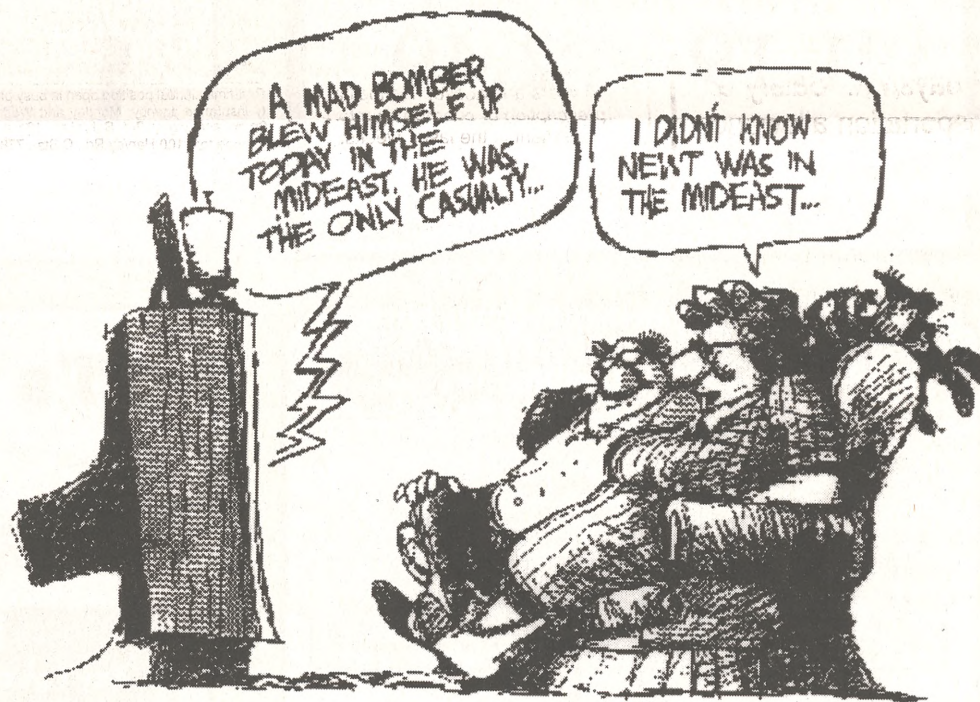
Furthermore, if a peer removes himself from such a peer group and forms a separate faction, that person denies himself of the opportunity to become further acquainted with my culture and robs me of the chance to do the same with his. This is not evolution toward a more inclusive society, one which is free from prejudice and hate, but a devolution into a society of hostile factions which tear at the threads of our society.

We have come too far from the dark days of "white only" and "colored" signs to slide back down the slippery slope of "multiculturalism," and we must not let that happen. It is a slap in the face to the memory of those who worked so hard to bring this nation past that abhorrent time to allow all they worked for to be undone in a misguided movement of political correctness.

We must win the war against prejudice and injustice. That cannot be done if we divide ourselves and declare war on one another. The old axiom stands as true today as it did in the past — "United we stand; divided we fall." If we refuse to adhere to that axiom by continually splitting the atom of society, that society is doomed to explode in a great fission of violence and hate. We don't want that to happen — just ask the Germans of the '30s and '40s.

Nathan Bouchér is a senior political science major.

MAKE LEMONADE OUT OF LEMON JUICE



Lack of character serves as no excuse

Ever since Adam pointed at Eve, and said, "it wasn't me, she did it," people have possessed a knack for placing the blame

somewhere, anywhere besides on themselves. Since that fateful day in the garden of Eden, little has changed. Not a day passes without stories of people offering excuses for their actions make the headlines of our newspapers. Sometimes these excuses even come from the mouths of our own leaders. After all, this is the country where the first lady suggests our president's troubles originate from a vast right-wing conspiracy and not an inability to control his libido.

These instances of personal responsibility absolution are so numerous, we are blind to them. They occur, and we hardly give them a thought.

Consider this story which broke headlines last week. It surrounds Viagra, the drug that has elicited frank discussion on a subject nobody wants to think about — old people and sex.

On May 15, Roberta Bernardo of New York state filed suit for \$2 million against her companion, Francis Bernardo. The 61-year-old woman claims Viagra led him to infidelity.

"He's rejuvenated and can get back out there," Bernardo told the *New York Post*. "At 70, I guess he figures he's going to party until he goes." Furthermore, Bernardo is threatening to sue Pfizer, the drug's maker, on charges that the company was negligent by distributing the pill.

Viagra does make a great scapegoat. Here is a wonder drug finding its way into millions of Americans' bedrooms by promising them miracles. If one of those miracles turns out to be more than the user bargained for, well, it makes great lawsuit material.

But Viagra is not the cause of Francis Bernardo's infidelities. Character, or the lack thereof, is. Pills, no matter what they do to one's hormone levels, do not make people go out and have affairs. People choose to cheat on their spouses.

To blame a character issue on a drug is morally bankrupt. By this line of reasoning, a pill could give or take such intestinal qualities as honesty or courage or honor. No pill, however, made Patrick Henry say "Give me liberty or give me death." No pill compels a soldier to protect his country. And no pill makes a person tell the truth, when a lie would be easier.

Character comes only when a person resolves himself to what is right and then acts on it. It is the stuff that allows a person to make those essential kinds of lifetime commitments that go for better or worse, for richer or poorer, for potent or impotent.

Character allows people to place blame where it belongs rather than making the sad excuses that pass as

acceptable these days. They are excuses that should be familiar to everyone by now.

Much has been made of the rash of highly-publicized shootings that have occurred in public schools during the past year. While people have been quick to blame television violence and easy access to guns for the violence, few have been willing offer a more realistic cause of seriously disturbed children and parents whose lack of supervision allowed the kids access to guns.

Passing the blame even finds its way onto campus here at Texas A&M. Consider A&M's parking problems, which most students ascribe to overly zealous Parking, Traffic and Transportation Services rather than students who will park anywhere in an attempt to get away with murder.

Of course these days, it is en vogue for people to say they are for personal responsibility. No one says they are against it, except maybe Democrats who back the welfare state. But reality shows what we say and what we do are two different things.

By the looks of today's headlines, personal responsibility is a fleeting characteristic. It is too bad that Pfizer can't put character in a pill, this country could sure use it a lot more than Viagra.

John Lemons is a graduate student in electrical engineering.



Texas A&M University

MAIL CALL

Lawsuit resolved by student leaving Corps

Response to Meredith Hight's June column:

I totally agree with Meredith Hight's well-written letter concerning the lawsuit over displaying the Confederate flag in the Corps dorm room. The individual involved has voluntarily chosen to join the Corps; and, as such, should be willing to play by all the rules, not just those he chooses to agree with.

He is certainly doing an injustice to both the Corps and the University by taking ridiculous course of action he has chosen to take.

I think he should just get out of the Corps, then he can display the Confederate flag tattooed on his forehead if he so chooses.

Charles N. Robertson

The Battalion encourages letters to the editor. Letters must be 300 words or less and include the author's name, class and phone number.

The opinion editor reserves the right to edit letters for length, style, and accuracy. Letters may be submitted in person at 013 Reed McDonald with a valid student ID. Letters may also be mailed to:

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