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# **PROTEST THE INFIRMARY'S SEXIST POLICIES ON THE MORNING AFTER PILL!**

**Thursday, December 4th at 2:30 p.m. on the Plaza of the Americas**

**Join us! We will expose and protest the UF infirmary's sexist policies on the Morning After Pill, then march to the Infirmary to demand unrestricted access to the Morning After Pill.**

**1. WE DEMAND the Morning After Pill when we ask for it without irrelevant anti-woman interrogations about our sex lives.**

- We want Infirmary clinicians to stop asking invasive, medically unnecessary questions, like where and with whom sex occurred, how long we have known our partner, and where we met him.
- Abolish the sexist Morning After Pill questionnaire which requires women to say if they were raped or whether they used contraceptives. Women should have the right to keep this information private if they want. It's none of your business!

**2. WE DEMAND that the Infirmary stop turning women away, saying we don't "need" the Morning After Pill. Stop pretending that clinicians can predict a woman's fertility. Women can get pregnant at any time during their menstrual cycle. Since when is the rhythm method of predicting fertility reliable?**

**3. WE DEMAND that the Infirmary stop requiring women to sign a statement promising to use "a reliable form of birth control immediately" before getting the Morning After Pill. This statement is insulting, condescending and probably medically unethical. It implies that we can never again get the pill from the Infirmary. Are men ever required to sign such statements?**

**4. WE DEMAND that the Infirmary publicize the Morning After Pill, along with other birth control methods, so women students will know what's available to them.**

- At least two ads in the *Alligator* each semester explaining what the Morning After Pill is and what it costs, as well as other birth control methods.
- Provide a flier at Preview to incoming freshmen listing birth control choices, including the Morning After Pill.
- Put up posters at the Infirmary telling students about the Morning After Pill.

**No more prying questions about our sex lives and personal business! No more hoping and waiting with fingers crossed! We want unrestricted access to the Morning After Pill!**

**We also want men to take their fair share of responsibility for birth control.**

- Wear condoms—don't wait for the woman to ask—and pay for methods of birth control she uses.

### **What Happens Now When I Ask for the Morning After Pill at the Infirmary?**

Women have to fill out a questionnaire requiring them to divulge information about the sex they had which has nothing to do with whether they can take the Morning After Pill or not.

*"I had to check a box saying whether I had used birth control or not or if I'd been raped. I felt pressured to say because I thought they might need to know it. I was afraid to put the wrong answer." —a UF student*

Women are also required to sign an insulting statement saying, "I will immediately begin using a reliable method of birth control."

*"I asked her why I had to sign saying I would use birth control from now on. I wondered what would happen if I needed the Morning After Pill in the future if I promised that I would use birth control on the form. I didn't get any counseling on birth control, either."—a UF student*

Sometimes the clinicians pry into women's personal lives, asking embarrassing and medically irrelevant questions about who they had sex with, how they met them and how long they have known them.

*"I was scheduled for my yearly exam with a nurse. I told her I needed the Morning After Pill. She said Why? What happened? She asked me how I knew the guy. She acted like she was judging me for not using a condom and I felt guilty and bad about myself from her questions and tone." a UF student*

Another student was sent home without the Morning After Pill, even though she'd had unprotected sex and thought she might get pregnant.

*"I asked if I would not be prescribed the Morning After Pill. He said he didn't think I needed it. I wasn't fully comfortable with this but I figured that this guy was a medical expert and knew what he was talking about. I accepted his answer, even though he didn't explain why. I left, thinking that I would wait it out and get an abortion if I was pregnant even though its really expensive." a UF student*

It doesn't have to be this way! Some women who go to the Infirmary report that they are able to get the Morning After Pill without hassles. Every woman, though, is asked if she was raped and if she used birth control. Everyone is also required to promise to use birth control in the future.

### **Do Other Clinics Treat Women This Way?**

Those of us who went to clinics other than the Infirmary had a better experience.

*"It was a really good experience as far as the way I was treated when I went to go get it. It was free. They didn't ask me any questions, they didn't tell me it was an emergency or make me sign a state-*

*ment about birth control. I liked knowing that I could control what would happen to me in the future , even though I couldn't control that I had sex."— a UF student who was raped*

*"I've never had a problem getting the Morning After Pill at the clinic I go to. I just tell them I need it, they give me a pregnancy test and that's it. No one ever asks me to give any details about the sex I had or whether I used birth control. The physician's assistant always acts like it's no big deal, that there's nothing bad or wrong with me."—a UF graduate*

We called two local clinics, Planned Parenthood and Bread and Roses, and neither clinic requires women to promise to use birth control before the Morning After Pill is prescribed. Neither clinic routinely asks women if they were raped or if they used birth control or not. Women can decide if they want to talk about this or not.

**Why would a woman who uses birth control need the Morning After Pill? Aren't women who use the Morning After Pill irresponsible?**

In our experience, it is men and not women who are irresponsible about birth control. We found that on average, men used condoms without our having to tell them only 10% of the time. They resist or outright refuse to wear them. This leaves women to take the full responsibility for birth control—and we almost always do. When we ask for the Morning After Pill, we're yet again taking responsibility.

Even though most of us use birth control consistently, sometimes we forget to take pills, condoms break, our partners refuse to use condoms or put up such a fight we give in, or we are forced to have sex. No birth control method is perfect or fail safe. Some problems we have had using birth control are cost and side effects, including loss of sex drive, migraine headaches, nausea, constant bleeding, urinary tract infections, and vaginal dryness.

Only one woman in our group used birth control every single time she had sex and she has a partner who wears condoms without a fuss. For the rest of us, the noxious side effects and expense of many birth control methods, combined with men's resistance to using condoms, meant that all of us had sex at least once without birth control. Less frequently we have gotten "swept away" by romance or alcohol . But should that mean we are then required to have a baby? Men don't have to pay this price.

**Why are feminists protesting the Infirmary over the Morning After Pill?**

Women need to have the right to control when and if they will have a child. This is a cornerstone of freedom and self-determination for women. Women should be able to have sex without risking pregnancy, childbirth, and 18 years of child rearing. The Morning After Pill is one more way for us to prevent pregnancy, and since there are problems with every birth control method, women need every option at their disposal. It's sexist for the Infirmary to discourage us from getting the Morning After Pill with their prying forms and questions, double standards or outright refusal to dispense it.

**What is the Morning After Pill?**

Also known as Emergency Contraception or Post-Coital Contraception, the Morning After Pill is actually four to eight birth control pills which a woman can take after she has had sex to keep from getting pregnant. You have to take the pills within 72 hours of having sex for it to work, and the sooner you take it, the more effective it is. It is 75-80% effective in preventing pregnancy. It is not the same as RU-486, the so-called "French Abortion Pill."

**Is it safe?**

The Morning After Pill is safer than other hormonal birth control methods like Depo-Provera and regular birth control pill use. There are possibilities for the same serious side effects as birth control pills, like a blood clot or stroke. These side effects are rare in birth control pill users, and even more rare in Morning After Pill users.

**Doesn't it make you sick?**

The Morning After Pill causes nausea in many women, but this does not happen to everyone. Some women experience vomiting. Taking the pills with food and using Emetrol, an over the counter anti-nausea medicine, lessens or prevents nausea entirely.

**How much does it cost?**

It costs ~~\$16.80~~ to get the pills at the Infirmary. Other clinics in town charge up to \$40.

**Wasn't this a problem in the past? Why are there still problems at the Infirmary with the Morning After Pill?**

In 1991, Michael Katsonis, a UF Infirmary pharmacist, refused to fill prescriptions for the Morning After Pill on religious grounds. After protest from the UF/SFCC Campus National Organization for Women (NOW), the UF administration asked him to resign. Yet some women are still being turned away, and the current Infirmary policies only humiliate women and limit access to the pill. We don't know why the Infirmary continues to allow clinicians to deny women the Morning After Pill, unless they believe that a potential pregnancy is more important than the woman herself and her hopes and plans for the future. If this is not the case, the Infirmary should act now, change the sexist policies, and put employees on notice that sexist treatment of women students won't be tolerated.

**What can I do?**

- We won access to the Morning After Pill before by taking feminist action and we can do it again! Join us Dec. 4 at 2:30 on the Plaza of the Americas. Call 377-9935 for more information
- Come to the next UF/SFCC Campus NOW meeting Dec. 3 at 6:30, Anderson 209, or call 379-7641 for more information.
- Write or call the Infirmary and tell them to implement the demands on this leaflet for unrestricted access to the Morning After Pill.

This protest and leaflet are projects of the 1997 community education class, "Women's Liberation: Where Do I Fit In?" taught by Gainesville Women's Liberation (GWL), the oldest southern women's liberation organization, founded in 1968. The experiences described here are those of class participants and people we interviewed. You can write Gainesville Women's Liberation at P.O. Box 2625, Gainesville, FL 32602.