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Misinforming people on birth control ends up doing more harm than good



DEREK WARWICK

“The problem with pushing these views on the unsuspecting or overly trusting is that it’s dangerous. Lying about contraceptive methods won’t do anything to help the rates of teen pregnancy or abortions—stats that people like van Kampen are up in arms about.”

Earlier this month, Go Life—the Pro-Life student group on campus—hosted a lecture by Peter van Kampen on chastity. It was entitled, “Sexual Revolution in an Age of Controversy.” While the views van Kampen relayed weren’t exactly revolutionary, they were certainly controversial for several people in the room—myself included.

The main point of the lecture seemed to be that “sex needs respect” and that we can’t accomplish this without being chaste. I say “seems” because van Kampen had no central argument. He began the lecture with the above idea in mind, but it quickly devolved into lies about sexual health, as well as racist, sexist, and homophobic discourse. Some examples: HIV is undetectable for ten years once contracted; condoms fail 20 per cent of the time; birth control makes women unattractive; it’s an inherent part of African culture that the men “sleep around”; and women must dress modestly because men can’t control themselves. (van Kampen essentially takes facts and distorts them to fit his agenda—while HIV can be dormant for ten years, it’s detectable after six months).

While he outlined many behaviours that one must necessarily follow in order to be deemed chaste, he made it clear that one can have sex and be chaste at the same time. According to van Kampen, as long as sex involves a heterosexual, married couple, it’s chaste. Oh, and it has to be vaginal, so tough luck if you’re a

woman who doesn’t enjoy penetrative sex.

While it’s tempting to laugh off these absurd ideas, it’s important that we take them seriously. For one thing, out of everyone in attendance, there were only nine who objected to the information being presented. Van Kampen is also but one person of many who are pushing these ideas on those willing to accept them—like students at high schools where people like him prey on impressionable teenagers.

The problem with pushing these views on the unsuspecting or overly trusting is that it’s dangerous. Lying about contraceptive methods won’t do anything to help the rates of teen pregnancy or abortions—stats that people like van Kampen are up in arms about. Telling people that homosexuality is a perversion isn’t going to help people like Lawrence King who are murdered because their sexual orientation doesn’t fit the norm. Arguing that women need to cover up because men are animals only helps to absolve rapists of their responsibility and to blame the victims.

Even more frightening was van Kampen’s shameless ignorance. When one member of the audience asked what Depo-Provera was after he mentioned it, van Kampen was quick to point out that it was a form of birth control pill and was caught off guard when he was informed this was not the case—Depo-Provera is an injection.

When a purported educator doesn’t know basic facts like this, their credibility and intentions should be questioned. Quite tellingly, when challenged about the inaccuracy of his facts, all van Kampen could do was encourage everyone to take time out of their day to do their own research.

Van Kampen—and indeed all abstinence-only sex educators—ultimately don’t care about our sexual health or even about the truth. Rather, these so-called educators care only about cramming the agendas of the Religious Right down our throats and neglecting our need for comprehensive information. Hormone-driven, sexually adventurous young adults who need to make informed decisions are being told that sex is dangerous and that they should wait until (heterosexual) marriage at the hands of the abstinence-only sex educators.

Evangelists like van Kampen shouldn’t be allowed into our high schools or university campuses if they intend on spewing forth their lies. They are, though, and it’s truly shameful.

What’s perhaps even more disheartening, though, was the general acceptance of van Kampen’s misinformation that Saturday afternoon, and the oblivious applause that followed his conclusion. Though he might seem like he’s trying to help us, if we accept false information like this and choose to live by it, it will only end up doing more harm than good to all of us in the long run.

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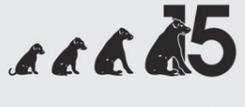


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LETTERS • CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9

Many students, like myself, have to live off of their credit cards to get by the tuition deadline while our student loans are still being processed. Eliminating the credit card payment as an option will create lots of challenges for a lot of people.

I understand these are difficult decisions, but will you please consider this statement and figure out a way to allow students to continue to pay with credit cards?

DARREN GRAY
Medicine I

Letters to the editor should be sent in text form to letters@gateway.ualberta.ca (no

attachments, please).

The Gateway reserves the right to edit letters for length and clarity, and to refuse publication of any letter it deems racist, sexist, libellous, or otherwise hateful in nature. The Gateway also reserves the right to publish letters online.

Letters to the editor should be no longer than 350 words, and should include the author's name, program, year of study, and student ID number to be considered for publication.

Also, I'm going to go ahead and throw this out there: bananas and strawberries combine to make the most fantastical beverage known to man: strawnana juice. You kiwi-strawberry-lime people might disagree, but you'd be wrong. Dead wrong.

LETTERS FROM THE ARCHIVES

Nobody drinks like Henday

It would seem the “boys” from Red Deer College have had too much to drink again. Instead of flapping their yaps in the Gateway, they should put their bottles where their mouths are.

The Ninth Henday Chugging Team challenges you to prove your mouths can be just as full of beer as hot air.

RICK MACDONALD
6 March, 1975

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