

Price of Birth Control Leaves Young Women Penniless

Deficit Reduction Act takes away discounted birth control for low-income women and university students

Forget buying that new pair of stilettos, ladies, the price of birth control is up and you have to start saving.

Young women all across the country are now having to clean out their pockets every month to have their birth control prescriptions filled. With the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005, which came into effect in January of this year, and because the stockpiled birth control has begun to run low, prices have skyrocketed, some to nearly four times their original cost.

One supposedly unintended result of the Deficit Reduction Act prevented drug manufacturers from providing university health centers and low-cost clinics with discounted birth control rates. University women everywhere are now having to find either a cheaper alternative, pay the extreme prices, or get off birth control all together – all of which are less than ideal for a sexually active college student.

For the many students taking brand name oral contraceptives like Ortho Tri-Cyclen, which has shot up in price from \$12.50 to nearly \$50, the high cost has become too much of a burden and many have had to switch to a generic and cheaper form, such as Apri, which now

costs \$15 per month.

Last year, a prescription for NuvaRing, a vaginal contraceptive, from the UCSC health center cost \$12.50 per month. As of this fall, its price has gone up to \$46 per month. This form of birth control, which is encouraged for those who have

Creating a situation in which women have to choose between compromising their financial situation and their health is less than fair.

difficulty taking pills, has lost many of its users in the past few months, leaving many women looking for an alternative.

Having to find a new birth control prescription and then making the switch can be troublesome for many women. Whether it be the switch to oral contraceptives or just a cheaper version of it, the fact is that women use a specific prescription because it is compatible with their bodies and it works for them. Creating a situation in which women

have to choose between compromising their financial situation and their health is less than fair.

For students on university health insurance rather than their parents', the rise in cost also jeopardizes the issue of confidentiality. Because some women

choose to take birth control without their parents' knowledge, higher prices on campus could force them to have to call on parents for financial help or switch insurance, taking away confidentiality.

The passing of this act hasn't been all negative for the parties involved though. Drug companies are making full profit and bringing in money hand over fist, but at the expense of college students and low-income people who used to rely on discounted birth control rates.

Why are people who are trying to be responsible and practice safe sex being punished? There needs to be a change in the legislation and quickly before high prices start preventing birth control users from being able to take their appropriate prescriptions at all.

It is our responsibility to get active and find a way to put this act behind us and get new legislation enacted. The Students for Reproductive Justice are already working toward getting the act overturned, and they're not the only ones. Rep. Joseph Crowley (D-N.Y.) has introduced the Prevention Through Affordable Access Act in an effort to make discounted drugs available again. The hope is to be able to present the act to the House by the end of the year, but until then, birth control prices are going to stay steep, so keep it safe. And don't forget, if you're looking for that cheaper alternative, you can get two condoms for 25 cents at the condom co-op, so take advantage of what the university has to offer until new legislation is passed.

Until then all we can ask is that if Congress is going to keep screwing us, they might as well give us birth control.

The Flying Spaghetti Monster is My Homeboy

Pastafarianism puts intelligent design on back burner, strains religious radicals

For those who thought the term "monkey trial" brought a little too much comedy to the otherwise-dead serious debate over the separation of church and state, a student from Oregon has brought it to a whole new level.

In response to the 2005 Kansas State Board of Education's vote to require intelligent design to be taught in classrooms as an alternative theory to evolution, Bobby Henderson, a physics graduate from the University of Oregon, drafted a letter to the board claiming that his personal religious beliefs were not being represented.

The Flying Spaghetti Monster created the universe, Henderson attested, and every time a scientist takes a measurement of the natural world, the Flying Spaghetti Monster changes the results with his "noodly appendage." The Flying Spaghetti

Monster created the universe after a night of heavy drinking, and looks like, well, a flying spaghetti monster. If intelligent design could be taught in classrooms, Henderson argued, Pastafarianism (the belief in the Church of the Flying Spaghetti Monster), should be taught as well.

As ridiculous as this sounds, he's got a point, and he's getting some attention. His letter became an Internet hit, and his website gets millions of hits from people who claim to be devotees of the ragú religion, well-wishers, as well as the occasional death threat. Select members of the Kansas Board of Education even wrote to Henderson, thanking him for the laugh. The board also rejected the previous inclusion of intelligent design in a February 2007 vote of 6-4.

Most notably, the American Academy of Religion, an

association of over 8,000 teachers and scholars, has recognized the popularity of this movement, and discussed it at its annual conference this November. One of several workshops on the

If intelligent design could be taught in classrooms, Henderson argued, Pastafarianism should be taught as well.

subject of Pastafarianism was titled *Evolutionary Controversy and a Side of Pasta: The Flying Spaghetti Monster and the Subversive Function of Religious Parody*.

"In a carnivalesque fashion, the Flying Spaghetti Monster elevates the low (the bodily, the material, the inorganic) to bring down the high (the sacred, the religiously dogmatic,

the culturally authoritative)," described the abstract of a workshop called *Noodling around with Religion: Carnival Play, Monstrous Humor, and the Noodly Master*. "Like historical

forms of popular subversion, the Flying Spaghetti Monster plays its monstrous role well, mixing physical and narrative categories in order to spotlight particular cultural and educational conventions that 'Pastafarians' consider absurd."

For what seems like a joke, Henderson's delicious deity has a poignant argument. To say that intelligent design is

scientifically based is absurd. It is faith-based, and should not be in the classroom. Since the hallmark Scopes Monkey Trial of 1925, the separation of church and state continues to be threatened.

Whatever people wish to believe, preaching should not be part of a public school education, and intelligent design is simply the dressing up of a religious belief as a scientific theory, and nothing more. Intelligent design has no more scientific base than Pastafarianism, so who is to say which is more correct, or that the Flying Spaghetti Monster did not create the universe? Henderson is not saying that intelligent design is wrong, or that religion should not have a place in people's lives.

Believe what you will, gentle readers, but let others have their own beliefs, and keep the long, noodly arm of religion out of our science classes.