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Tuesday, October 10, 2000

University will not prescribe FDA-approved abortion pill

By Melissa Schenkman
Contributing Writer

Despite the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's recent approval of the abortion pill, RU-486, University health officials said they would not prescribe the drug to Emory students.

RU-486, also known as mifepristone, which was approved by the FDA Sept. 28, offers women an alternative to the traditional surgical procedure for abortion.

The drug has already been administered to over 620,000 women in Europe since 1988, when RU-486 was first permitted in France, according to the FDA.

Interim Medical Director of University Health Services Michael Allen said that Emory would not prescribe the pill because he said his facility is not capable of meeting the FDA imposed guidelines.

For a doctor to prescribe the pills, he or she must be able to determine how far along the pregnancy is and provide surgical backup if the pill does not work. In addition, a doctor must have ultrasound equipment in the office to be able to date the pregnancy.

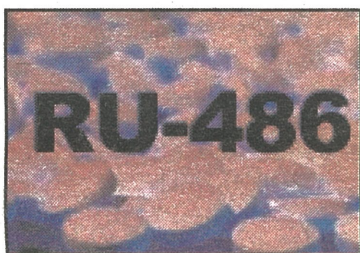
Allen said Health Services would provide referrals to local doctors and clinics that can prescribe the drug.

The pills — and the required ultrasounds, checkups and lab work — cost about the same as a surgical abortion: between \$300 and \$400. Abortion rights advocates, however, expect that cost to go up because Danco Group, a women's pharmaceutical company, has an exclusive license to manufacture, market and distribute the drug in the United

States.

Obstetrician-gynecologists and family practitioners, who care for pregnant women, are the specialists most likely to offer RU-486.

Fewer than 10 percent of obstetrician-gynecologists perform the surgical abortion procedure, and among those who do not, a recent survey by the Kaiser Family Foundation suggested that 45 percent might prescribe the abortion drug. The study also reported that about half of fami-



ly practice physicians, nurse practitioners and physicians' assistants said they would be willing to prescribe the drug.

"We refer students to the Feminist Women's Health Center where they can provide back-up in case of complications and have three years of experience," he said, adding that the Feminist Women's Health Center of Atlanta has been one of the testing sites for RU-486 over the past three years.

RU-486, which has been available in Europe for more than a decade, is a series of pills called mifepristone and misoprostol. In combination, these pills prevent progesterone production, a vital hormone necessary during pregnancy, and induces contractions and the abortion of fetal tissue.

Despite the hurdles that RU-486 may have before it becomes commonplace, some abortion rights groups are already calling the drug's approval a victory.

Director of the Emory Women's Center Ali Crown said she would recommend the pill to students seeking to end unwanted pregnancies.

"To me, this all comes down to a health issue," she said. "I was around before *Roe vs. Wade*, and I know about women who had illegal abortions. That is why I think this is a fragile right that we have to protect. If medical technology and science keeps coming up with new ways to improve our life, then we should embrace it."

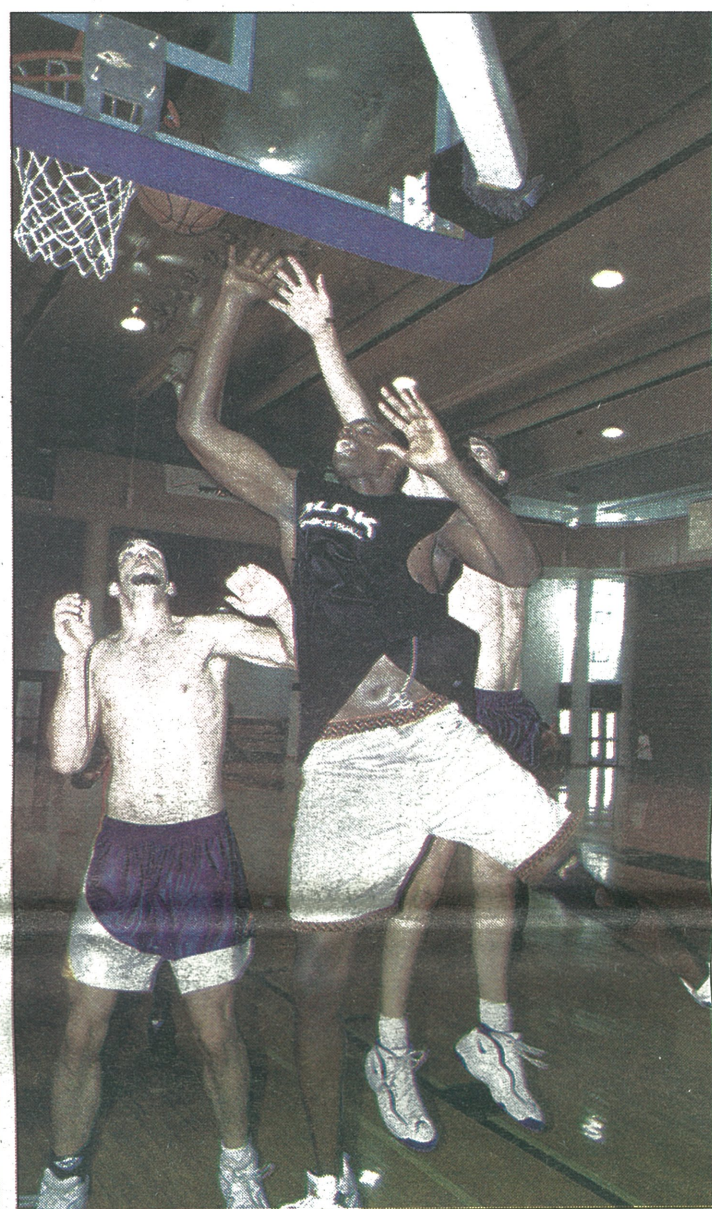
The procedure is about 95 percent effective, and most women experience cramps similar to a difficult period, according to the National Abortion Federation, an abortion rights organization that licenses clinics and abortion providers.

The amount of bleeding often is greater than with surgical abortions, with many women passing large blood clots.

Insurers have yet to weigh in on whether the drug, which will be marketed under the brand name Mifeprex, will be covered in traditional plans. Abortion rights advocates expect that insurance companies that already cover abortions will cover this new option.

But the issue of student health insurance coverage for RU-486 has yet to be addressed. The insurance company that provides health insurance for Emory students meets once a year. Since the annual meeting has already taken place and the policy

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Stanton M. Paddock/Photography Editor

Head over Heels

College sophomore Doug Frieberger (left), a center on the men's basketball team, can only watch as University of North Carolina center Brendan Haywood goes up for a layup Thursday afternoon at the Woodruff Physical Education Center.

Committee meets to discuss Village safety

By Crystal Edwards
Staff Writer

Emory Village residents and business owners cited the need for more pedestrian and bicycle safety at the first of three Emory Village Steering Committee workshops Thursday at White Hall.

The broad intersection of North Decatur Road, Dowman Drive and Oxford Road, which has few pedestrian crosswalks and many intersecting streets, is dangerous Village merchants and Emory administrators agree. While there are no current plans to solve this problem, University officials and community leaders brought in planning experts to discuss the Village's future.

The newly-formed committee is working with the Urban Land Institute, a national non-profit organization of experts in architecture and land development, to devise plans for the future of the Village.

Dan Burden, a member of the ULI

and executive director of Florida-based Walkable Communities, offered a preliminary assessment of the Village and suggestions for rebuilding, starting with the aforementioned intersection.

"I'll say it boldly. This is one of the worst-designed intersections in

America, and it isn't good for anybody," Burden said.

Burden focused on reducing traffic in the village, notably the suggestion of replacing the current intersection with a roundabout.

Burden said a roundabout would clamp down on speeding, and

reduce traffic buildup on North Decatur Road by allowing cars to keep moving, rather than having to stop for a red light or wait for traffic to clear before making a turn. Burden said roundabouts decrease traffic by approximately 30 percent, slow speeds to between 15 and 18

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File

Emory Village residents and business owners, advocated changing the intersection of North Decatur Road, Dowman Drive and Oxford Road to a roundabout at a meeting in White Hall Thursday.

College politicians sponsor Georgia state Republican chairman at rally

By Matthew Carey
Contributing Writer

Emory's political season continued Wednesday as the College Republicans hosted a rally to support Republican candidates on the back steps of the Dobbs University Center.

The rally's main speaker was Eric Tanenblatt ('88C), the state chairman for the George W. Bush presidential campaign. He has worked as an aide to late Sen. Paul Coverdell (R-Ga.), and as Georgia head of staff for former Sen. Bob Dole's (R-Kan.) failed 1996 presidential campaign.

Originally slated to speak at the rally was Sunny Warren, Republican candidate for the Georgia fourth dis-

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Kathryn Schuyler Smith
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Kristin Blair Cochran
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Gregory Scott Siera
Jared Van Aalten
Katherine Lucile Dunn
Jennifer Gray Andrews
Marie Alana Kozel
Kyle Haswell Marinello
Benjamin Fischer
Andrea Christine Pawliczek
David Benjamin Sambur
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Samantha Leigh Tunis
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GRADUATES

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Jason Hall
Hsinchen Lin
Heather Bibb

Emory Health Services lacks equipment to provide treatment necessary for drug

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has already been published, RU-486 coverage will not be on the agenda until next year.

"Any time there are new developments in the medical field they are always taken into consideration and brought forth to the committee," said Kimberly Taylor, Emory's health service insurance coordinator. "This is in no way to guarantee that RU-486 or any other prescription

drug will be covered under next year's plan. It will be brought up during our committee meetings."

College sophomore Andrea Midyett said that while she disagrees with the approval of RU-486, she said there are some cases where it might be useful.

"I disagree with the use of RU-486 as a form of birth control, which it could become if distributed on a very liberal basis," she said.

"However, there are certain circumstances, like rape, in which the university should provide the pill not just a phone number or referral."

College junior Jennifer Reardon agreed. "In extreme circumstances such as rape I feel that the University health insurance should also cover the cost."

► News Editor Barney Gimbel contributed to this story.



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