

# The Monthly Rag

Brought to you by the Feminist and Gender Studies Student Advisory Council

Half Block, 2012

## Obama administration stuns women's health advocates and abortion opponents alike

Many are calling for President Obama to reverse the HHS decision to block FDA approval of Plan B over the counter without an age restriction. Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius took unprecedented action today to overrule the FDA's recommendation to approve.

Women and girls' lives are in the balance. The FDA's recommendation "reflects a body of scientific findings [and] input from external scientific advisory committees." The Center for Drug Evaluation and Research and FDA Commissioner Margaret Hamburg, MF, agreed. "Experts, including obstetricians/gynecologists, and pediatricians reviewed the totality of the data and agreed that it met the regulatory standard for a nonprescription drug and that Plan B One-Step should be approved for all females of child-bearing potential."

This decision not only affects girls' lives, but also women's. Right now, Plan B is accessible only behind the counter and after the presentation of an ID that proves age of at least seventeen years old or a prescription. This is simply an unnecessary burden on accessing a medication that has a narrow time limit on its effectiveness to prevent unintended pregnancy. Plan B must be freely available over the counter without government interference.

Women must not be forced to jump through unnecessary hoops to obtain safe and effective contraception. Men and boys of all ages can obtain condoms easily, without interference from any government authority. Women and girls deserve equal treatment and respect, at the minimum.

*Feminist Majority Foundation*

"I support women. I'm like a human bra!" -Liz Lemon

## Male birth control pill soon a reality

implants, patches and creams also on the way

A range of choices

Over the past 5 years, researchers around the world have had a great deal of success with male contraceptive pills, patches, implants and creams that deliver various amounts of hormones. It is now believed that an MHC in the form of a daily pill could be available on the market within 5 to 7 years and implants could arrive even sooner.

"An injectible or an implant (similar to Norplant for women) will be the first to be approved. The big studies are now under way," says Dr. Christina Wang, who is heading up the clinical trials of MHCs at Harbor-UCLA Medical Center. She and her colleagues have found that a combination of progestin and androgen implants are safe, effective, inexpensive and entirely reversible.

The California researchers have tested several different products in hundreds of men and are also collaborating with investigators in China. A Chinese clinical trial is now under way at 10 different sites across China and includes 1,000 men. The Phase III trial involves a single injection given once every month. Wang hopes to start a similar trial in the United States within the next 2 years.

We are trying to find the best combination with the least amount of side effects and then the least amount of medication that may be required to get the maximum effects," says Wang.

Wang adds that in some countries, a low-cost, reversible and long-acting form of an MHC could become commercially available within the next 3 years. However, she says it will probably be at least 5 years before one is approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration.

Interestingly, Wang says there is now greater interest in this technology than there ever was in the past and there is now more funding available worldwide than ever before.

But will men take it? Some say yes, some say only if their partners make them, and others say they would never even consider it.

*msnbc.com*

If wealth was the inevitable result of hard work and enterprise, every woman in Africa would be a millionaire.  
~George Monbiot

Boxing in skirts more feminine?

The International Boxing Association may soon require female boxers to wear skirts. The President of the Association, argues that it will allow viewers to tell the difference between men and the women who currently wear the same uniforms, including headgear. Right now the skirt is an optional variation but, it may soon be compulsory. At the European Championships, female boxers from Poland and Romania adopted the new uniform. A coach of the Poland team said: "By wearing skirts, in my opinion, it gives a good impression, a womanly impression."

This might be an example of officials assuming that (1) men are the main audience for boxing and that (2) men will watch women's boxing more if they differentiate/sexualize women.

It might also, however, be an attempt to retrench difference between men and women exactly when those differences start to dissolve. Discomfort with the lack of *actual* differences between men and women sometimes leads individuals to encourage or enforce *artificial* ones. I would say that this is one of the main functions of clothes today. In any case, it's probably a combination of both.

The idea that female athletes aren't sufficiently feminine has been around as long as sports have been around. Today, the feminizing of athletes is ubiquitous.

*Thesocietypages.org*

## From slutty to horny.

Female horniness is an important, and missing, narrative in our culture. We have a well-developed idea of female *sluttiness*, but that's a different thing.

Sluttiness, as popularly perceived, is:

- External. A woman *looks* slutty, she *dresses* slutty, she *acts* slutty. Whether she *feels* slutty is not something we generally talk about.
- Indiscriminate. We seem to draw very little line between "will have sex with multiple people" and "will have sex with anyone and doesn't care if it's an alley cat."
- Mysterious. Why is a slut slutty? There are some attempted answers out there — need for attention, trying to get something from men — but most often she just *is*. It's a character flaw or something. Just as a slut's internal experience of sluttiness doesn't get talked up much in the popular narrative, neither does her reason for choosing the slutlife.

Whereas female *horniness* in the popular imagination is rare. Admittedly our idea of male horniness is pretty scrambled too, but we have some concept of it as a near-universal male experience. On the rare occasion a woman is horny in the mainstream culture, usually it's comical or even threatening.

This is getting better over the years. Slowly. But it's still not an accepted thing that a woman can just plain want to get her grind on. (Actually, seeing women as horny isn't new; it's just undoing the work of the Victorians. In medieval Europe women were often described as lustful and desiring — the ideal of the sexless woman in Western culture is only about 200 years old.)

Here are the things about horniness that seem to make people nervous:

- Horniness is internal. It's defined entirely in terms of a woman's experience of her own body and feelings.
- Horniness is selective. I'm horny for *some* of the men but not *all* of the men, and that's some sort of radical statement apparently.
- Horniness is humanizing. Women get horny just like people do! It's impossible to get all "woman, she is a mystery" on this; if you've ever had that warm tickly feeling in your pants, you know exactly where a horny woman is coming from.
- "Nervous" is an understatement. These are the things about horniness that drive people — male and female — to completely deny that women's sexual desire exists and matters.

I don't want to make this post just about "slutty is bad and horny is good." The behaviors

commonly called "slutty" are not bad or dirty; that was the point of the Slutwalks. But they're a painfully incomplete portion of female sexuality. Without understanding that women can not just *invite* sex but actually *want* it, we can't make sense of any of the issues surrounding women's sex lives.

The biggest one being: Only when we accept that women can want can we accept it when they don't want. If sex is only ever something women tolerate, then being forced to tolerate it is not so fundamentally different from tolerating it to sustain a relationship. This isn't just about rape either. It's also about women in the condition of tolerating sex and not expecting anything more; women who have learned to disregard their own desires. Women are taught how to say no, and more recently how to say yes, but we're still not up to saying "I want it."

I feel sort of weird living in a society where it's radical to say that I want my good-to-rub parts rubbed, that I want to choose who does it and how, and I'm not going to apologize for this. But it is. I guess I'm a revolutionary then.

Slutwalk is old news; let's have a Hornywalk.  
*provocracy.blogspot.com*

Do you have a question, want more info or resources, don't understand something, or want to contribute to our publication? Contact Andi or Tess:

*Andrea.Ruybal@ColoradoCollege.edu* or *Theresa.Gattuso@ColoradoCollege.edu*