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Barnard Health Services focuses on HIV education

By Jessica Shaw

Spectator Staff Writer

While Columbia Health Services includes an HIV clinic, counseling, testing and education among its services dealing with AIDS, Barnard College Health Services takes a different approach, focusing solely on the educational aspect, according to Director of Barnard Health Services Dr. Harriet Mogul.

“There is an inherent difference in the focus, needs, and goals of the students,” she said.

Barnard does not need a clinic like Columbia’s because the Columbia center is reaching men and older people, she said.

“Barnard women would have had to contract HIV at 12 through 14 in order to express itself on campus,” Mogul said.

In addition, Mogul said she is not aware of any Barnard students or faculty infected with HIV.

“The services are educational services because most of the students need to know how to protect themselves now,” Student Coordinator of SPEACH Naomi Stotland, BC’91 said.

Students Providing Education and Counseling on HIV (SPEACH), a student-run

group, trains peer educators to go floor to floor and discuss with students how to lower chances of contracting sexually transmitted diseases.

“[SPEACH] is more than an AIDS information center. It involves how to use information you know in your life. It involves skits, exercises, utilizing strategies to use information to reduce risks,” Mogul said.

Barnard Health Services is doing its job by providing services for those who need them, Stotland said.

“The services are educational services because most of the students need to know how to protect themselves now,” she said.

Paul Douglas, co-director of the Columbia Gay Health Advocacy Project (CGHAP) said his group would be willing to work with Barnard Health Services on peer educating but that Barnard is not willing.

Mogul denied charges of not cooperating with CGHAP, but said Barnard has a different philosophy based on different needs.

Student groups from Columbia College and Barnard worked together on orientation programs, she said.

CGHAP Director Laura Pinsky said she knew of 30 Columbia students who were HIV positive, and the statistic of Columbia students infected with HIV was higher than the national average of two to six per 1000.

If the need for treatment should arise, Barnard would have its own resources, though

not in the form of a clinic setting, Mogul said.

Mogul said although Barnard would not dispense medicine such as AZT because of insurance, it would make sure that a student could receive outside help.

Douglas, however, criticized Barnard's services saying they banned a valuable student coordinated group called the AIDS Peer Educators (APE) in 1988.

"They wasted an effective student agency and tried to replace it with a quisling group," he said.

APE was established in the fall of 1987 and worked with Dr. Mogul until the group became independent in September 1988

because of disputes over who would present the information and what the information would entail, according to Pamela Mund, BC'89, who was an AIDS Peer Educator at the time.

The Barnard administration imposed a moratorium on APE because the administration did not think that APE had sufficient information to be teaching students about such a serious issue, administrators said at the time.

On Oct. 20, 1988 General Counsel and Vice President Kathryn Rodgers wrote in a memo "We can't have an unsupervised group giving out information about something as

serious as AIDS. Should an issue arise, who is the person to determine how it is presented? The information should be given by doctors, not undergraduates."

“They didn’t want to work with Health Services and there were students who did,” Mogul said this semester, refusing to comment further on the issue.

Former Coordinator of APE and current Program Coordinator of Sexual Programs for Columbia Health Services Leslie Kantor, BC ’89, said it was a “highly unethical” act to ban APE because the campus needs as much education as possible.

“Different styles and different approaches are never grounds for eliminating freedom of speech, especially as effective as this one,” Kantor said.

Kantor called for all groups to clarify information for all students because AIDS is not an issue that will disappear.

“We’ll learn to live with AIDS for the rest of our lives. No longer will it be in capital letters in newspapers. Now we need to make the curricula more comprehensive. Now it’s confusing,” Kantor said.





SPECTATOR FILE PHOTO

Harriet Mogul

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