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Reply to Ryan: why condoms don't work

By William Moormann

I truly thought that the mentality at Columbia could not surprise me anymore. Well, I am the first to admit I was wrong. Granted, Conor Ryan's "A profound need for prophylactics" [*Spectrum*, Feb. 11], is not necessarily representative of the Columbia community, but I cannot help but wonder at the thought behind the article. Ryan tries to make the point that Campus Crusade for Christ was attempting to spread "misinformation to promote their own agenda." Ryan then proceeds to tell us the real truth about condoms and AIDS.

Let us start with the facts. I freely admit that I do not know where Leslie Kantor of the Sex Information Council of the United States gets her information, but the idea that the "theoretical" condom breakage rate is one percent is moot. Four percent do break, and two percent do leak in standard tests. Yet, even

beyond that, C.M. Rolands of Rubber Chemistry and Technology states very explicitly, "The rubber comprising latex condoms has intrinsic voids of 5 microns. The AIDS virus is only 0.1 micron." So even if no condoms break, the virus could still get through.

Let us move from theory to practice. Ryan points out that 13 percent of condoms break due to lack of knowledge on the part of the users, and he is right. As a matter of fact, the figure goes as high as 18 to 20 percent for teenagers. What Ryan fails to mention is that this is among the age group that has had sex education in their public schools, i.e. condom education. Even in the past two years, AIDS among 14 to 23-year-olds has gone up 72 percent. C. Everett Koop, cited by Ryan, also said, "never was a disease so tailored to wipe out an entire generation."

CCC does have an agenda here. Regardless of whether Ryan or Kantor categorically label us as a "far-right" group or of "extremely conservative values," we are genuinely concerned with the spread of AIDS. It is not a news flash to say that AIDS is fatal. Yet Ryan claims through the words of Kantor and Pinsky that people might get in the mindset of, "if condoms don't work, then well, I might as well not use them at all." I think they are absolutely right. Why does anyone use a condom in the first place? Because he or she is convinced that it offers some degree of protection. If the

truth is that condoms do not protect against AIDS, is it not more dangerous to tell people that they are not at risk while using one? Who in his or her right mind would trust a life to a parachute that had a 13 percent failure rate? Yes, I believe abstinence is the only effective way to reduce the risk of HIV infection, and I am willing to promote that belief for the sake of the Columbia community.

My last question: If the research with which David Thom has provided is correct, then what? We have been lied to, and are risking our lives for the sake of that lie. I encourage everyone to examine the evidence and find out the truth.

It could save your life.

Counterpoint

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