

FDA rejects 'Plan B' contraceptive

Report sparks charges of political meddling over emergency pill

Tony Pugh
KNIGHT RIDDER NEWSPAPERS

WASHINGTON — Top officials at the Food and Drug Administration appear to have decided to block over-the-counter sales of a controversial emergency contraceptive months before completing their review of the application in 2004, a new government report said Monday. According to the Government Accountability Office, top officials — some of them political appointees of President Bush — took "unusual

steps to impede the approval process. The GAO's findings renew accusations of political meddling at the FDA, which has been criticized for more than two years for failing to bring the Plan B contraceptive to market despite the urging of its scientific staff. When taken within 72 hours of intercourse, Plan B blocks conception with 89 percent reliability. Health advocates, women's groups and congressional Democrats charge that the FDA has been slow to approve nonprescription sales of the drug because of opposition from conservative groups that see it as a form of abortion. The drug is available by prescription. In August, the FDA deferred action on making it available over the counter. The agency said it

was safe for girls and women 17 and older but concluded that issues surrounding its potential sale to younger teens remained unresolved. The GAO found that minutes of FDA meetings in January 2004 show that Dr. Steven Galson, the acting director of the FDA's Center for Drug Evaluation and Research, said former FDA Commissioner Lester Crawford already had decided to recommend blocking the application. That decision was made months before the FDA completed its staff review of the application to sell the drug without a prescription, the report says. In addition, FDA officials told GAO investigators that Galson and others had told them in late December

FDA ● 6

Health center offers 'morning after' pill to students

Helly Cavanaugh
FOR THE GAMECOCK

When the previous night's activities lead to morning-after anxieties, USC students can find a second chance with Plan B, commonly known as the morning-after pill. "When things don't go as planned" is Plan B's slogan, and USC student Mica Jenkins thinks it's a fitting one. "That's the essence of where the name comes from," said Jenkins, a third-year interdisciplinary studies student. "No one plans to go out and have unprotected sex." USC began offering Plan B at the Thomson Student Health Center within months of its approval by the FDA in July 1999, said Dr. William

Boggs, a gynecologist at the health center. He said that while USC was one of the first universities in the state to get Plan B, the center was already distributing morning-after pills in the form of higher doses of birth control. In April 2003, Barr Pharmaceuticals, Plan B's distributor, put in a request to the FDA to approve the morning-after pill for over-the-counter use. The request was denied, despite a 24-3 approval by an FDA Advisory Committee. On Monday, the independent Government Accountability Office released a report alleging that the FDA did not follow regular procedures in making this decision.

PILL ● 7

In 2 separate storms, student lost homes

After experiencing powerful Fla. hurricanes, Tyler Niemiec reflects on Katrina's devastation

Herbert Uzzi
FOR THE GAMECOCK

Tyler Niemiec's family has lost everything twice in hurricanes, but his home in West Palm Beach survived Hurricane Wilma without any damage. "It was a major relief when I found out that my house had actually made it this time," said Niemiec, a fourth-year hotel, restaurant and tourism management student. "I was expecting to hear that it had been totaled again." When Niemiec was 9 years old, his life was turned upside down by Hurricane Andrew, one of the most powerful and destructive hurricanes ever to make landfall in the United States. Niemiec and his family were living in their Miami home that was destroyed. "We drove north about 60 miles to stay with relatives

(during the storm)," Niemiec said. "When we got back home, everything was gone." Niemiec and his family quickly moved to West Palm Beach to start their lives over with the help of friends and family. "We didn't have insurance because up until Andrew, these storms were all bark and no bite," he said. "They would always talk the storms up but they would never cause any real damage." Eleven years later, Niemiec's family relieved the nightmare as the 2004 hurricane season battered Florida from coast to coast and even the panhandle. Hurricanes Charley and Frances caused the most damage to Florida, but Frances destroyed the Niemiec family home again, this time in West Palm Beach.

HURRICANE ● 8

Columbia hip-hop landscape tests one rapper's skill, resolve

Herbert Uzzi
FOR THE GAMECOCK

Former USC student Gerald Collison is getting some attention in the Columbia hip-hop scene. Collison, who goes by the nickname "Q-Tip" or just "Tip", has been rapping since his high school days. He attended USC from 2002-2004 but is taking a semester off to work on his music. Collison will release his first CD under the stage name of T.H.C., which are his initials if you substitute "Tip" for Gerald, which he often does. Collison will not be selling the five-song

collaboration CD, but is simply giving it out to those people whom he thinks can help put him on the track to further success. The album will be released in affiliation with Broken Records, a record label native to Columbia that is also up-and-coming in the hip-hop scene. Collison's CD includes the songs "Smash for That Money," "You Ain't," "Kick My Flow" and "Say Ahh." The release comes after a string of good luck for Collison. He was asked to rap a part in a cover of a Gorillaz song

RAPPER ● 5



Nick Soares / THE GAMECOCK

Third-year nursing student Ben Sokol cheers for the Gamecocks during Saturday's 30-22 win against the Florida Gators at Williams-Brice Stadium. This week's matchup against Clemson is sold out but will be televised nationally at 7 p.m. on ESPN2.

Tiger on the brain

Freshmen sound off in anticipation of Carolina-Clemson game

Kristen Highley
FOR THE GAMECOCK

Many first-year students rushed to the Carolina/Clemson blood drive this week, some coming close to passing out just to beat rival Clemson in one of the many contests on campus leading up to the big game. First-year public relations student Sydney Botelho said: "I've never experienced anything like this before. Where events like giving blood become a rivalry, and people sometimes give blood just to beat Clemson. It is just crazy." For many first-year students, the huge rivalry between the Clemson Tigers and the USC Gamecocks is a new experience. In the week leading up to the game, there are a number of rivalry activities to participate in, from the rivalry blood drive to the Gamecocks-Tigers ice cream war held by Marble Slab.

"This rivalry is pretty intense," said Gabe Barnes, a first-year political science student. "The level of excitement for this game is almost unmatched in college sports, and I can't wait to experience it first hand." With the freshman class having a large percentage of out-of-state students, there are many students who are experiencing the big rivalry for the first time. "I thought the University of Virginia and Virginia Tech rivalry was big, but it doesn't even touch this one," said Crystal Clement, a first-year nursing student. First-year criminal justice student Steven Buse, a North Carolina native, said, "There really is no huge college football game like this in North Carolina. So it is definitely a new experience for me. I can't wait." While most students are in a frenzy for the big game, there are some that are not totally impressed. "I am looking forward to seeing what this rivalry is all about, but there are other huge games," said Craig

RIVALRY ● 5



Jessica Munday / THE GAMECOCK

Fourth-year business student David Hopp bartends at Damon's in the Vista. Students who did not get tickets to the Clemson game can watch it on ESPN2 at restaurants such as Damon's.

ESPN2 to air rivalry, appease angry fanbase

Helly Cavanaugh
FOR THE GAMECOCK

USC athletics officials announced Tuesday that ESPN2 will broadcast Saturday's game against rival Clemson. Game time is still set for 7 p.m. and the game will be aired throughout South Carolina. The telecast will also be available nationally through

DirectTV, the DISH Network, ESPN GamePlan and ESPN GamePlan online. The game was originally scheduled to air on pay-per-view, at a cost of \$24.95. "We have worked diligently with ESPN and the (SEC) office to come up with a resolution that is in the best interest of the

GAME ● 5

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