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## UW Offers Abortion Class For First Time Elective Course Geared Toward Helping Future Doctors Deal With Patients, Emotions

Sun., Oct. 6, 1996



**By Associated Press**

The University of Washington School of Medicine has included abortion and training in teaching curriculum for years, but this year an organized class on the subject is being offered for the first time.

The course, an elective, is geared toward helping future doctors deal with patients having abortions, as well their own emotional, moral and ethical issues concerning the procedure, school officials said.

“We’re not teaching them to do abortions; we’re teaching them about abortions,” said Dr. Thomas Easterling, a UW professor of obstetrics and gynecology.

“This is a great context for learning about ethics in medicine,” he said. “There is no right answer here. ... This will help medical students integrate personal values into the practice of medicine.”

The elective took shape when a group of students pushed for it to become a specific, more-defined part of their curriculum.

Such classes are taught in a handful of medical schools across the country, according to the group, part of a national organization called Medical Students for Choice.

Members of the local group, who spoke anonymously to The Seattle Times, said they complained to their professors that they weren’t learning what they needed to know about abortion - the most commonly performed procedure on women.

“During my first two years, I never remember the A-word being mentioned,” said one fourth-year medical student.

“In part, I helped design the course to help seed my own education, because there were these gaps,” she said.

Course work for “Voluntary Pregnancy Termination: An Overview of Medical and Social Issues” includes reading medical literature on abortion and attending a symposium covering prenatal diagnosis, surgery techniques and abortion-inducing drugs.

Students will also have the opportunity to spend 20 hours in clinics observing counseling sessions, pregnancy testing and abortions.

Like other electives offered, the course will not involve performing procedures.

Many, however, are up in arms about the course’s existence.

“A doctor is supposed to be trained to save lives, and every abortion involves the taking of life of a member of the human family - the most vulnerable, tiny members,” said Maureen Malloy, a lobbyist with the National Right to Life Committee.

University officials argue that the medical aspect of abortion should not be confused with the moral aspect.



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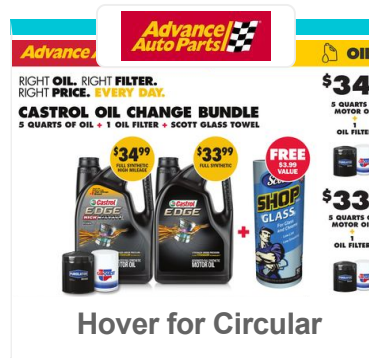
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