

Easier access to 'morning after pill' probable

THE "morning after pill" may soon be made available over-the-counter.

Speaking to the *Barbados Advocate* recently, Director of the Barbados Family Planning Association George Griffith, said that women should be able to easily access this contraceptive in a case where they had unprotected sex, but did not desire pregnancy.

Seeking to dispel misconceptions about this regarding its effects on the body, he said that, "The pill that we provide is called the emergency contraception (EC) which cannot cause an abortion."

"What it will do is prevent a pregnancy

from taking place, especially if a person has had unprotected sex for whatever reason," he said. "Three things can happen upon taking this pill, one it slows down the progress of the sperm, making it more difficult for it to reach the egg. If the sperm has already reached the egg and it is fertilised, then it prevents implantation by making the uterus inhospitable to the fertilised egg. And thirdly if a pregnancy is already established the emergency contraceptive pill Optinor will have no effect whatsoever. It will not harm the woman, it will not harm the pregnancy and will not cause any abor-

tion. So it is safe," he stressed.

Pointing out that the pill was available in the island's pharmacies and at the BFPA, he outlined his organisation's push to have it made available over the counter and without a doctor's prescription.

Saying several meetings had been held with the Ministry of Health regarding this move, he outlined his expectations that this would soon be a reality.

"The Ministry of Health through the drug service is still looking at that and at the last meeting, we got the impression that one or two adjustments may be

made. So we expect that within the first half of this year that this decision would be taken, but in the meantime it requires a doctor's prescription," he stated.

"So we are hopeful that Optinor would come onstream, it is good for women because they must have the power and the control to exercise over their own lives and we do not believe that anybody should be able to tell a woman who has had unprotected sex that she should not ensure that she does not develop an unwanted pregnancy," Griffith said. (JM)

Verdun House turns to Happier Horizons

By Erica Lazare

EXPERIENCED Clinical Psychologist from New Zealand, Mr. Adrian McInman conducted a productive four-day workshop recently, based on his 'Happier Horizons' patented philosophy for the current residents of drug rehabilitation centre Verdun House, in an attempt to help them in their journey to overcome their substance abuse battles.

Centred around the 'NOISE' principles – an acronym for Neuroticism, Optimism, Internal locus of control, Self-esteem and Extroversion – McInman delivered an energetic lecture on the third day of the workshop series in which he interacted expertly with the residents.

He began by seeking the definition of happiness from his audience and all agreed that it was not about using various narcotics as a means to survive the stresses of life, but rather being at peace with one's self and having an open awareness of the pitfalls of crime.

Then the discussion moved to extroversion and the fact that, based on several of his conducted studies as well as others carried out by known published professionals, individuals who are sociable are happier in life than those who are introverted or less sociable.

"Extroverts gain socially, professionally and psychologically. Being extroverted affects one's likelihood to exercise as they are more prone to play team sports."

"Gaining an ability to be sociable also affects the perception of stimuli which basically means that one would be able to better deal with more stressful situations. In my experience, it directly affects whether you commit suicide when you

are depressed," commented McInman.

However, he warned the Verdun residents that significant psychological change is not rapid or easy and that being too extroverted has its pitfalls, stating that achieving 'ambiversion', which lies in the middle of the extroversion-introversion continuum, is the best place to be.

"There is a down-side to extroversion. Those in this category tend to have more sexual partners, eat fattening foods, drink more alcohol, develop an addiction to drugs, have heart attacks, be involved in accidents, develop post traumatic stress syndrome and if female, develop onset asthma," he stated.

In speaking to the *Barbados Advocate* about the programme, the participants said that it helped tremendously as they grapple with substance abuse.

"This has been a gift to me. It gives you a chance to learn tools and I think it has helped me to workout what it is I want in life. The entire rehab programme has been good because I have people here who care about me," said one young man that preferred not to give his name.

Ryan a cocaine addict said, "This is good for my future as my life was stagnant before I came here. Adrian taught us breathing exercises so that we can meditate and calm ourselves. We learnt the importance of assertiveness, patience, tolerance and he enlightened me on things I did not know about."

McInman, who has travelled extensively around the Caribbean and the United States, said that the applications of NOISE has helped all types of people, not just those in drug rehabilitation programmes, citing his quests in elderly care homes and business houses within some of the eastern States of the US.



Clinical Psychologist Mr. Adrian McInman as he delivered an interactive lecture during his Happier Horizons workshop at Verdun House.

No discrimination of alternative lifestyles

PERSONS have the right to choose their own sexual orientation.

Outlining the principles set within the International Planned Parenthood Federation's Sexual Rights Declaration, Barbados Family Planning Association's (BFPA) Director, George Griffith, said the document firmly recognised alternative lifestyles and that individuals have the right to select their sexual preference, which should be free from judgement.

"If two women decide to establish an intimate relationship, that is their business. Similarly the same goes for two men. We

do not believe that it is for us to dictate to people how they should live their lives, neither should we discriminate against them by putting barriers in their way or limiting the quality or the level of services they should get. We think that is a very personal choice which is not taken lightly and we have to trust people to make decisions, what is in their best interest," he said, during an interview with the *Barbados Advocate* recently.

The Sexual Rights Declaration was one of the major initiatives which was passed at the 36th Annual General Conference of

family planning associations held last year. According to him, the relevance of the document was vital in a society which was often highly ambivalent towards such matters of sexuality as "at times people's sexual oriental rights were subject to the religious thoughts of the day, the government of the day and its particular philosophy, a number of traditional cultural values and in some cases, myths and misinformation".

He nevertheless stressed, "We are not here to promote same sex relationships. It is a reality and we have to deal with that

reality. Whoever comes to us will benefit from the best quality of service we can offer. So we are not going to say that lesbianism is wrong or a relationship between two men is wrong. That is for them to decide."

The document, which was created by several high-ranking officials within that area, including the President of the international body, clearly identified several decisions made by the United Nations overtime on sexuality and the fundamental rights and freedoms of individuals. (JM)