

# ACCENT

## Abortion

*Procedure is quick, but it determines a patient's future*

By KIM WOOD  
Special to the DTH

It only takes about five minutes. A thin tube is inserted through an enlarged cervix, and a strong suction, known medically as "vacuum aspiration," quickly removes the contents of the uterus.

This operation, which most women do not consider extremely painful, is usually followed by a quick physical recovery. Of the approximate 30,000 abortions in North Carolina in 1981, more than 90 percent were conducted by vacuum aspiration. The whole procedure takes no more than several hours, and it can be done in a doctor's office or clinic for about \$200.

It is a procedure with which many women students on the UNC campus are familiar. During the spring semester, about 100 students underwent this or some other type of abortion, Student Health Service statistics show. About the same number of abortions is expected this semester. These figures come only from those who report pregnancies. No one knows how many go unreported.

It is a trend that, according to these reported figures, has remained fairly steady on campus during the last five years. But statewide, the number of women between the ages of 15 and 44 who became pregnant and had an abortion rose nearly 70 percent from 1974 to 1980 (the last year for which figures are available).

The rate also rose among women between 20 and 24 years old. In Orange County, which has one of the highest abortion rates in the state, about half the women between the ages of 20 and 24 who became pregnant had an abortion.

Most students opt for abortion simply because they feel it is pragmatic under the circumstances, counselors said. For those who do go through with their pregnancies, they may have to quit school or change their plans for the future. Of UNC students who reported pregnancies last semester, only 20 percent decided to continue their pregnancies.

But if abortion is pragmatic, it generally is not taken lightly. Student attitudes toward abortion are influenced by a number of things, including personal values, religious background and opinions of friends and boyfriends.

"There's frequently sadness and grieving over the loss of the pregnancy," said Pam Walters, head of problem pregnancy counseling at SHS. Since most women expect to become pregnant at some time, there is often regret over the timing.

*One 23-year-old woman had been using an intrauterine device for three years. Pregnancy was the last thing she expected.*

*"I was very shocked," she said, her dark blue eyes widening. "I felt kind of backed against a wall... like I'd done everything I could and it still happened. I kept thinking, 'No, it can't be that, it can't be that.'"*

*She decided to have an abortion the same day she found out she was pregnant.*

*"I didn't think that emotionally or financially I was in a position to give a child the things I wanted to," she said. "I couldn't even give it a father."*

*Before the abortion, the pregnancy haunted her continuously. "It's like you've got this pit in your stomach and knowing that you can't get away from it."*

*she said. "I'd wake up and I'd start my day and 10-minute intervals didn't go by when it didn't go through my mind."*

*She remembered the procedure at the clinic this way: "I was talking to the counselors and then it got bad and I said, 'I can't talk anymore.' It was over real fast. I remember the counselors said, 'It's over,' and I said, 'It is?' I couldn't believe it! It wasn't pleasant, but it was brief.*

*"The next day I cried all day," she said, but the sadness soon dissipated.*

*an effective birth control method that's been working for years.' It was just emotionally devastating."*

*She received support from her boyfriend, and he paid half the price of the abortion. "He was in some ways more upset about it than I was," she said.*

*Pressure from school made her want to get the second abortion as soon as possible, she said. "I remember feeling relieved that I could study again."*

*Someday she wants to have kids, but*

*"To me it was never an issue of any kind of sinful thing. What I believe is wrong is bringing a child into the world when it would be unwanted."*

Perhaps surprisingly, most UNC students who became pregnant were not using any kind of contraception. Many women do not even try to obtain contraceptives because doing so would force them to admit to themselves that they were being sexually active, Walters said. This makes many women uncomfortable.

"A lot of people are out there having sex even though they really don't want to and they don't think it's right," Walters said. Pressure from partners and the idea that "everyone else is doing it" may strongly influence a woman's decision to have sex, she said.

Student counselor Nancy Whitchurch agreed that there seemed to be a big push on campus to have intercourse.

There are other reasons women don't seek contraceptives besides a refusal to confront being sexually active. "Many think, 'It can't happen to me. It happens to other people, but it won't happen to me,'" Walters said.

Other women simply fail to plan ahead. Or they take their chances on getting pregnant. Whitchurch, a counselor in the Sexuality Education and Counseling Service, likened this to a game of Russian roulette and added, "It's unbelievable how naive people can be." The probability that a woman not using any birth control will become pregnant is about 90 percent.

"A lot of people don't realize just how hard your body tries to get you pregnant," said Laura Mundell, a counselor at a Durham abortion clinic.

Women who were using birth control when they became pregnant usually experienced resentment and anger, counselors said. The most commonly used methods of birth control among UNC students are the pill, withdrawal and condoms, Walters said.

*Another woman, a UNC graduate student, has had two abortions, the first when she was 16 and the second during her senior year at UNC. As she reflected upon her experiences, she sat relaxed and talked easily of her feelings.*

*"To me it was never an issue of any kind of sinful thing," she said. "What I believe is wrong is bringing a child into the world when it would be unwanted."*

*Though she was not using birth control the first time she got pregnant, the second time she was using an IUD. She was shocked when her body began to exhibit the signs of pregnancy.*

*"I thought, 'Oh my God, it's got to be a mistake!'" she said. Then when the symptoms proved to be accurate, she became angry. "I thought, 'Why the hell did this happen to me? That's not fair! I have*

*only when the timing is right. "I can't see how any woman couldn't be resentful of having a kid when that would just throw a wrench into her whole life," she said.*

For those UNC students who become pregnant and opt for abortion, making that decision can cause as much anxiety as the abortion itself.

"Many women feel that the abortion is in control of them," Whitchurch said. "For women who have never had to make a decision before, having to take responsibility for themselves in this context can be traumatic."

Other women make the decision with little anxiety. "Some people feel strong because they're taking charge of their lives," Mundell said.

Many women seek support from partners and friends, but few students discuss their decision with their families. Some women may feel their parents would be disappointed in them, but some don't tell their parents because they feel it is a personal decision, Walters said.

But counselors agree that it is important for women to talk with someone about their decision. There are several services on campus designed to help women with problem pregnancies, including counseling at SHS, and the Sexuality Education and Counseling service.

*For one Durham resident, the abortion she had during her sophomore year in college has caused some inner turmoil. As she looked back on her experience, her clear blue eyes grew thoughtful, and she said softly, "I feel pretty callous about the whole thing. To me to kill anything is absolutely the worst possible thing you can*

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*She had been using an IUD for several months when she found out she was pregnant — a discovery that caused shock and anger. "You don't ever think it's going to happen to you," she said. "It was just kind of like a bad joke."*

*Before her abortion, she tried not to dwell on her emotions, she said. Raised in a strict Southern Baptist family, she never told her parents about her experience. "They would have felt that they were the ones who had been wronged," she said.*



Pam Walters says regret sometimes follows an abortion ... she is head of problem pregnancy counseling at SHS

*She is still sorting out the experience in her mind. "I don't know if I've ever come to grips with whether abortion is right or not," she said. "I don't feel like that's something I can ever know for sure. I just had to do what I had to do."*

For women who have had an abortion before, counselors say, the anxiety surrounding the second one can be just as intense. Among UNC students who report

to assess. Though most studies deny strong negative consequences, they may be misleading because of their reliance on what women say their feelings are, said Vaida Thompson, a UNC psychology professor. "Just because people can't verbalize them (negative feelings), doesn't mean they don't have them."

Most women adapt their behavior to their situation, Thompson said. "People have to defend themselves. The healthiest thing to do is to say, 'I'm glad I did it.'"

And while there may be a slight downward trend in students who report pregnancies, it's too early to tell, Walters said. But regardless of the trend, students will very likely continue to deal with pregnancy and abortion on a personal level.

If abortion is a campus problem, it is a problem only as it relates to each person involved, said Frederick Schroeder, dean of student life. "We have great concern for them, but it's not an institutional problem per se."

Whether women students view pregnancy as a problem, few situations have such life-changing potential. As one counselor simply put it, "Whatever decision they make, it's going to determine their future."



## Experimental films tonight at 8

By TODD DAVIS  
Staff Writer

Joe Toast and Jane Blank go on a date to MegaMall Cinema, lay down four bucks each and watch *An Officer and A Gentleman*.

Yet, beyond the great mall movie walls, there lurk other types of movies. These other movies are made without studios, stars or *People* magazine. Instead of Hollywood formula, these alternative movies reflect the director's personal vision regardless of whether the movie has any understandable dialogue, characters or plot. Defying easy categories, these movies generally are called "experimental films."

What is an experimental film? No one knows for sure. Perhaps the best answer is to go and see an experimental film tonight at 8 in the Union Auditorium as the Union Film Committee presents Experimental Film Night. Movies featured include *Murder Psalm*, a film about matricide by Stan Brakhage, *Serene Velocity*, which depicts the changing structural perspectives of a hallway, by Ernie Gehr, and *Breath*, which addresses filming the wind, by Andre Zdravic.

When watching experimental films for the first time, one must be careful, said Tom Whiteside, a local filmmaker interested in experimental films. "You shouldn't expect an experimental film to be like going to a regular movie theater and watching *Star Wars*," Whiteside said. "Watching experimental films is more like seeing an exhibit in an art museum."

"To appreciate an experimental film you have to have an open mind and open eyes," he said.

Even with open minds and eyes, experimental films may affect audiences in strange ways. Whiteside recalled that last spring during an experimental film one guy got up, walked to the stage and kissed the movie screen. "Of course, one should show proper manners in viewing experimental films as they would in an art gallery," Whiteside said.

Among the directors featured tonight, perhaps the most famous is Stan Brakhage of *Murder Psalm*. Although his main concern is experimental film, Brakhage has produced commercial film projects for such items as laundry soap. Remember the bottle of April-fresh Downy floating down through white clouds to land on a soft blanket? That commercial was produced by Brakhage.

But the *Murder Psalm* Brakhage is quite a contrast from the Downy Brakhage. Whiteside said that Brakhage got the idea for *Murder Psalm* while reading Freud's assertion that no cases of matricide dreams had ever been reported. Disturbed, Brakhage went to sleep and dreamed of chopping his mother into mince meat. Inspired by the matricide dream, Brakhage produced *Murder Psalm*, which contains death images ranging from a morgue in Pittsburgh to a cartoon mouse being run over by a car.

What does *Murder Psalm* mean? "It's very personal, very subjective and very emotional," Whiteside said. But what does it all mean? It's up to you.



Cicely Berry is concerned with keeping language alive ... invited to UNC to help teach "Shakespearean"

## Visiting instructor helps graduate students learn to speak 'Shakespearean'

By JO ELLEN MEEKINS  
Staff Writer

Cicely Berry wants to keep language alive, and for the past three weeks, she has been teaching UNC students to do just that.

"Language is where we are as people. When language becomes dehumanized, we become dehumanized," Berry said.

Cicely Berry works with more than 100 actors of the Royal Shakespeare Company to maintain its high standards by working on the language of Shakespeare. Dr. Barringer, head of the department of dramatic art at UNC, invited Berry to Chapel Hill to teach UNC graduate students to speak the Shakespearean language. She also teaches a few undergraduates.

Berry first taught at the Central School of Speech and Drama in England. Early in her career, she taught such well known actors as Sean Connery, Peter Finch, Ian McKellen and Ben Kingsley.

For the past 13 years, she has worked with the Royal Shakespeare Company. She also has written a book, *Voice in the Actor*, which discusses how actors use and train

their voices. The book is used in nearly every drama school in England and in many in the United States.

"Shakespeare is quite difficult because actors must honor all rhythm and imagery. Everything happens on the word itself," Berry said.

Berry feels that in modern literature, the dialogue does not articulate exactly what the actor is thinking.

"In Shakespeare, every image is necessary; they are not poetic descriptions. They are a release of the feelings of the character," Berry said. "In modern life, we tend to hide our feelings — to underplay them."

In addition to the United States, Cicely Berry has taught in India, Yugoslavia and Germany. Her stay in Chapel Hill ends Friday.

"With concentrated work, I hope that the students will feel that they can cope with any kind of Shakespeare," Berry said. She also said she hoped the students would have a good grasp of how to work on a language, which will help them with modern language as well.