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## Professor Finds Condom Editorial Full of Holes

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As a professor of advertising I must take exception with the editorial "Condom ads offer already failed solution," (Catholic Herald, Jan. 20). I am disappointed in the suspect sources and undocumented information Thomas J. Smith provides to support his argument against the recent U.S.-sponsored ad campaign

promoting condom use and "safe sex."

Smith's single quote from an officer of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops appears based on conjecture, not factual results of any research. In addition, the editorial includes at least seven instances of "quotes" without indication of the sources of these quotes. Not one published study is referenced.

From a content standpoint, the condom ads are "new" because they are blunt and forthright, depicting sit-

uations and participants that the key target audiences can relate to. Several college students that I've talked to have said they pay attention to the message and like how they are being talked to in these advertisements.

This type of approach has been used successfully before to address social problems. Advertising campaigns featuring "the ugly person" to curb smoking in the 1970s and 1980s coincided with a significant decline in tobacco product sales. Just check tobacco company sales figures.

Hard-hitting drunk driving advertisements are just starting to have an effect on statistics, with the number of incidents appearing to be peaking, according to transportation figures. In time, the condom ads will also help in curbing the dangerous sex practices of teens and adults.

In addition, the analogy of this campaign to campaigns to make drug use for teens safe is the proverbial apples and oranges comparison. Drug use is an illegal activity; sex is not. It occurs, it will continue to

occur, and if we don't start raising the information level and the concern level concerning the dangers of sex, this problem will only get worse.

Finally, no alternative solutions are proposed to address the problems of sexually transmitted diseases. One would assume that Smith's solution is the same old naive approach to convince teens to practice abstinence. Talk about an already failed solution!

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