

EMERGENCY CONTRACEPTION UPDATE

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Introduction:

Emergency contraception (EC) is one of the range of contraceptive options for women and is used after unprotected sexual intercourse. Indications for its' use include sexual assault, unprotected intercourse, condom breakage or slippage, diaphragm dislodgement, and missed or late doses of hormonal contraceptives, including the oral contraceptive pill, contraceptive patch and injectable contraception.

Methods:

Since 2004, levonorgestrel (LNG) EC has been available in Australia as a Schedule 3 medication from pharmacies. Broad geographical locations and opening hours of community pharmacies has meant that access to EC in a timely manner has been facilitated for women. With the recent introduction of a new EC medication into Australia (ulipristal acetate) - currently a prescription only medication, it is timely to review all of the current methods of emergency contraception available in this country. In addition to LNG EC and ulipristal acetate, the insertion of an intrauterine device is the other method of EC. The actions, efficacy, safety, contraindications and side effects for each method will be discussed.

The barriers to and enablers of access to each method of EC will be explored. In addition, myths about the various methods of EC will be discussed as these are also potential obstacles to its' use. This paper will also outline new hormonal formulations currently being trialed internationally for EC.

Conclusion:

EC is an underutilised method of contraception that has the potential to reduce unwanted pregnancies and reduce the abortion rate as well as act as a bridge to ongoing effective methods of contraception. It is important for clinicians to understand each EC method to ensure the best outcome for the client.

Disclosure of Interest Statement:

The author has no conflict of interest to declare.