



Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain

Helping pharmacists achieve excellence

To the Editor
Daily Mail Newspaper

By email

03 December 2007

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Dear Editor,

Regarding your article 'Girls as young as 12 are given the morning-after pill – without parents' knowledge', research from Imperial College, London (2005) showed that making Emergency Hormonal Contraception (EHC) available through pharmacies has not encouraged unsafe sex nor has it increased usage of EHC. Furthermore, evidence shows that the majority of women who access EHC are over 20 years of age.

EHC is widely acknowledged as a safe form of contraception. The Committee on the Safety of Medicines and the Medicines Commission have advised that the use of EHC should be part of a solution to cut down on teenage pregnancies, not a solution in itself. It is important to recognise that EHC is only one part of the work that is going on to help reduce the number of unwanted pregnancies in Great Britain, and it is not a substitute for regular contraception for any age group.

EHC helps to reduce the number of unwanted pregnancies and the resulting 200,000 abortions performed every year in Britain. However, to be effective, EHC needs to be taken as soon as possible after intercourse, preferably within 24 hours and certainly within 72 hours. Having EHC available directly from Britain's 12,000 pharmacies increases the chance of access to safe and professional advice. Supply of EHC within this crucial time period maximises the pills effectiveness by as much as 10 per cent.

Community pharmacists are expert health professionals and are ideally placed in the community to provide expert advice about health and about practicing safe sex as well as preventing unwanted pregnancies. As is the case with other non-prescription medicines, pharmacists use their professional judgement to decide whether they believe the supply of EHC is both necessary and in the person's best interest.

Yours sincerely,

Hemant Patel
President