



The Massachusetts Emergency Contraception Network October 2005 Newsletter

About this Newsletter:

This newsletter is prepared and distributed by members of the Massachusetts Emergency Contraception Network. To contribute a news item or remove your name from the newsletter circulation list, please write to: Stacie@prochoicemass.org. We reserve the right to check and edit items as appropriate.

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In this Issue:

In Massachusetts:

1. Update on the New Massachusetts EC Law
2. Awareness of EC Low in Lynn, Survey Shows
3. Central and Western Mass. Update

Around the US:

1. American Academy of Pediatrics Supports Non-prescription Sales of EC to Teens
2. FDA Consultant, Frank Davidoff, Resigns Over Plan B
3. GAO Report Says FDA Action on Plan B Unusual; Crawford Declined to be Interviewed During Investigation
4. Doctors Favor Nonprescription Sales of EC, But Support Age Restriction
5. Wyoming: Pharmacy Board Rejects Proposal Allowing Pharmacy Refusals

Around the World:

1. India Approves EC Over-the-Counter
2. Public Health Clinics in Mexico Make EC Available

In Massachusetts

1. Update on the New Massachusetts EC Law

The new emergency contraception (EC) law which was passed overwhelmingly on September 15, 2005 will require hospital emergency rooms to offer EC to rape survivors. It also will allow women to get EC directly from participating trained pharmacists without getting a doctor's prescription first. The law will go into effect on December 15, with full implementation of the pharmacy access provisions taking place after the Department of Public Health writes the necessary regulations and protocols. The Massachusetts EC Network continues to work with our partners in the medical, pharmacy, and public health communities to lay the groundwork for effective implementation of the law. Continued education with health care providers, pharmacists, and women will be of vital importance in the coming months. To get involved, please contact Stacie at 617-556-8800 x15 or Stacie@prochoicemass.org.

For more information, contact Stacie at: Stacie@prochoicemass.org or call 617-556-8800 x15

2. Awareness of EC Low in Lynn, Survey Shows

Only 65% of women surveyed in Lynn had ever heard of emergency contraception or the "morning-after pill" according to preliminary results from an EC Network survey. Awareness was even lower among Hispanic/Latino women – only 55% reported having heard of EC. The survey was conducted in Lynn from July to August 2005.

For more information, contact Stacie at: Stacie@prochoicemass.org or call 617-556-8800 x15

3. Central and Western Mass. Update

In the past month, EC trainings have been conducted for providers at Charlton Family Practice, peer health educators at Umass-Amherst, and the Gandara Center and High Street Clinic in Springfield.

Additionally, the EC Network would like to thank Pam Bockol for all her work increasing awareness of EC in Western Mass. and building connections with groups interested in EC. Pam will be wrapping up her EC outreach project at Planned Parenthood League of Massachusetts at the end of October. We'll miss you!

For more information, contact Pam Bockol at: Pam_Bockol@pplm.org or call 413-732-1620 x1220.

Around the U.S.

1. American Academy of Pediatrics Supports Non-prescription Sales of EC to Teens

On September 1, the American Academy of Pediatrics released a policy statement supporting over-the-counter sales of EC to teenagers. They also encourage physicians to discuss EC with their adolescent patients if they are already discussing sex and related issues.

For more information, please click on the link below:

http://www.kaisernetwork.org/daily_reports/rep_index.cfm?DR_ID=32374

2. FDA Consultant, Frank Davidoff, Resigns Over Plan B

Frank Davidoff, a consultant and former member of FDA's Nonprescription Drug Advisory Committee, resigned in protest of the agency's action to delay a decision on Plan B. He is the second person to leave the FDA, following the resignation of Dr. Susan Wood of the Office of Women's Health.

For more information, please click on the link below:

http://www.kaisernetwork.org/daily_reports/rep_index.cfm?DR_ID=32989

3. GAO Report Says FDA Action on Plan B Unusual; Crawford Declined to be Interviewed During Investigation

The FDA's decision to reject the over-the-counter application for Plan B was unusual, states a draft report from the Government Accountability Office (GAO), because it contradicted the recommendations of two FDA advisory panels and was signed only by the director of the Center for Drug Evaluation and Research, not by members of the FDA review team, as is usual. The report also says that Lester Crawford, then FDA Commissioner, did not respond to requests to be interviewed by GAO staff. On a related note, a bipartisan group of 62 U.S. legislators is urging the new acting FDA Commissioner Andrew von Eschenbach to approve the Plan B application.

For more information, please click on the links below:

Crawford - http://www.kaisernetwork.org/daily_reports/rep_index.cfm?DR_ID=33102

GAO report - http://www.kaisernetwork.org/daily_reports/rep_index.cfm?DR_ID=33075

Legislators - http://www.kaisernetwork.org/daily_reports/rep_index.cfm?DR_ID=33048

4. Doctors Favor Nonprescription Sales of EC, But Support Age Restriction

About 53% of physicians support over-the-counter sales of the emergency contraceptive Plan B, but 68% support age restrictions which would require prescriptions for patients under age 16, according to a national survey by HCD Research. The survey also found that 68% of doctors surveyed believed sales of Plan B without a prescription would significantly reduce unplanned pregnancies.

For more information, please click on the link below:

http://www.kaisernetwork.org/daily_reports/rep_index.cfm?DR_ID=32933

5. Wyoming: Pharmacy Board Rejects Proposal Allowing Pharmacy Refusals

The Wyoming State Board of Pharmacy rejected a proposal that would have allowed pharmacists to refuse to fill prescriptions based on their personal beliefs. Over 100 letters were sent to the pharmacy board objecting to the proposal. Many people were concerned about access to contraception and EC, especially given the long distances between pharmacies in some parts of the state.

For more information, please click on the link below:

http://www.kaisernetwork.org/daily_reports/rep_index.cfm?DR_ID=32956

Around the World:

1. India Approves EC Over-the-Counter

On August 31, India's Central Drugs Standard Control Organization approved emergency contraception for nonprescription sales in the country and notified manufacturers.

For more information, please click on the link below:

http://www.kaisernetwork.org/daily_reports/rep_index.cfm?DR_ID=32376

2. Public Health Clinics in Mexico Make EC Available

In July, Mexico began requiring its 19,000 public health clinics to stock emergency contraception. Public health advocates point to the benefits of increased access, while the Catholic Church and conservative politicians challenge the policy.

For more information, please click on the link below:

<http://www.womensenews.org/article.cfm/dyn/aid/2459>



The Massachusetts Emergency Contraception Network provides a forum for those interested in improving access to and knowledge of emergency contraception - including medical providers, community organizations, and government agencies - to share ideas, coordinate resources, and maximize the impact of our work on the shared public health goal of reducing unintended pregnancies.

For more information concerning the Massachusetts Emergency Contraception Network please contact 617 556 8800 x15, or stacie@prochoicemass.org.