



AMERICAN
SOCIETY FOR
REPRODUCTIVE
MEDICINE

12-5-03

Dear Sir or madam,

These comments from ASRM
are submitted for the meeting
of the Reproductive Health
Drugs Advisory Committee and
the Non-prescription Drugs
Advisory Committee on
Tuesday, December 16.

If you have any questions, please
call me @ 202-863-2439.
Thank you,

Eleanor Nicoll
Public Affairs Manager
ASRM

Office of Public Affairs

409 12th Street, SW
Suite 203
Washington, DC 20024

Tel.: 202/863-4985
Fax: 202/484-4039
www.asrm.org

OIP-0075

C 299



AMERICAN SOCIETY FOR REPRODUCTIVE MEDICINE

Formerly The American Fertility Society

849 '03 DEC -8 10 '40

ASRM STATEMENT ON OVER-THE-COUNTER AVAILABILITY OF PLAN B (LEVONORGESTREL) EMERGENCY CONTRACEPTIVE

Attributable to Marian Damewood, MD, President, American Society for Reproductive Medicine

The American Society for Reproductive Medicine supports switching the status of Plan B (EC) from prescription to over-the-counter availability.

For women whose normal method of birth control has failed or who have been raped, emergency contraception provides a very reliable means of preventing unwanted pregnancy. Unfortunately, EC is not always readily available. It is often difficult to reach a women's health physician for a prescription during the weekend and hospital emergency rooms do not always provide EC. Access is crucial if EC is to work effectively; while it has been found to be 89% effective when used correctly, the first dose must be taken within 72 hours of unprotected intercourse, and sooner is better, if possible.

If we are to optimize women's reproductive health, it is essential that we remove impediments to obtaining EC. It has been estimated that over-the-counter availability of EC would result in increased use which could prevent 1.7 million unplanned pregnancies per year and countless abortions. This would make a remarkable difference in the US, a country with higher rates of unintended pregnancy and abortion than any other Western, industrialized nation.

Plan B, a levonorgestrel-only emergency contraceptive, does not present serious risks. Five states- Washington, California, Alaska, Hawaii, and New Mexico- have already made it available directly from pharmacists without prescription.

Available studies show that the drug is safe and that consumers are easily able to follow the package instructions. Use of EC will not influence them to use regular contraception less frequently; and, if EC is available over-the-counter, they are more likely to use it when necessary.

The American Society for Reproductive Medicine, founded in 1944, is a national medical professional society with close to 9,000 members in the US and abroad dedicated to advancing knowledge and expertise in reproductive biology. ASRM works to promote the reproductive health of women and men through its commitment to research, professional and patient education, and advocacy in health care policy.

Prepared with the assistance of Steven Sondheimer, MD.