

Publication

Emergency hormonal contraception in Switzerland: a comparison of the user profile before and three years after deregulation

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OBJECTIVES: To evaluate the time lapse between sexual intercourse and request for emergency hormonal contraception (EHC) from pharmacies and to analyse the profiles of EHC users shortly after deregulation and three years later, assuming EHC became better-known and more easily accessed. **METHODS:** Official EHC written assessment forms were collected from pharmacies in Switzerland. **RESULTS:** Written assessment forms from 729 women aged 15-49 years (380 forms pertaining to the 2003 period and 349 for the 2006 period) were collected in 18 pharmacies. Due to the presence of more women aged less than 18, women in Group 2006 were significantly younger than those in Group 2003 ($p = 0.014$). Nearly one quarter (23.6%) of the women went to a pharmacy for EHC within 6 h of unprotected sexual intercourse. The median access time was 12 h in 2003 and 14 h in 2006 ($p > 0.05$). Variance analysis showed a relationship between time to access and the contraceptive methods used ($p > 0.001$) with male condom users going to a pharmacy the earliest after unprotected intercourse, followed by pill users and by women without any contraception. The number of women who did not use any contraception doubled from 2003 to 2006. **CONCLUSIONS:** Dispensing EHC through Swiss community pharmacies allows women to seek EHC easily and rapidly after unprotected sex. The observed changes in user profiles do not support the concern regarding enhanced sexually risky behaviour, more frequent use or misuse due to free access to EHC. The findings support a more liberal access to EHC.

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