

Publication

Do Swiss community pharmacists address the risk of sexually transmitted infections during a consultation on emergency contraception? A simulated patient study

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Objectives:: Since 2002, Swiss community pharmacists have dispensed emergency contraception (EC) as pharmacist-only medicine ideally using the official Swiss protocol. Our study aimed to determine pharmacists' resolution of an imaginary EC case, compliance with the protocol, and provision of information on the risk of sexually transmitted infections (STIs).; **Methods::** We conducted a simulated patient study with 69 students who each visited a community pharmacy. The scenario started with the student requesting the 'morning after pill'. Current practice was assessed using an online evaluation form adapted from the Medication-Related Consultation Framework. Descriptive and statistical analyses were carried out.; **Results::** All pharmacists correctly identified that the person needed EC. All pharmacists used an EC protocol and asked on average 10.9 (standard deviation 0.68) of 11 compulsory EC assessment questions. In total, 93% of pharmacists addressed EC counselling items and 56% addressed the risk of STIs, mainly by mentioning that condoms offered the best protection (76%).; **Conclusions::** Community pharmacists correctly issued the EC, complied with the dispensing protocol and used their professional judgement to ensure optimal EC use. There is nevertheless room for improvement regarding pharmacists' STI counselling. Finally, the protocol's STI section could be enriched with specific information to guide counselling.

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