



November 13, 2008

Update from OCs OTC Working Group

Dear member of the OCs OTC Working Group,

We wanted to give you a quick summary of the **panel presentation that we had APHA** last month. Kelly Blanchard presented on the safety and effectiveness of OTC provision, and I spoke about provider perspectives and concerns (our presentations are attached). Cindy Pearson of the National Women's Health Network spoke about concerns women might have related to a possible OTC switch and whether OTC provision would really improve access, especially for underserved women.

Approximately 50 people attended the session, and the discussion was quite lively. While there was a lot of interest in the possibility of an OTC switch for OCs, there were also a number of concerns. Some of the concerns that were voiced centered around:

- **Lost counseling opportunity:** Would women be able to accurately self-screen for contraindications? Would they be able to select an appropriate pill from the many choices on the market? Would they be able to take it appropriately?
- **Cost of contraceptives:** Would some women end up paying more? Would the cost increase in an OTC environment? Would insurance coverage be lost?
- **Other preventive services:** Would women still get Pap smears and STI testing if they could get OCs OTC?

Luckily, much of the discussion could be informed by evidence from recent studies, but some topics—such as the cost issues—were really in a data-free zone. The discussion helped to highlight some of the areas the working group needs to focus on in the coming years.

In case you didn't receive it, I'm also sending around the **Guttmacher Policy Review** entitled **"Making the Case for a 'Contraceptive Convenience' Agenda."** It's a great summary of the issues related to access and contraceptive use.

Please let me know if you have any questions or comments about this material.

Thanks,
Dan

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