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### Dear Working Group Member,

Please save the date for the next general meeting of the Oral Contraceptives (OCs) Over-the-Counter (OTC) Working Group, which will take place on Tuesday, October 20, in Washington, DC. We will be sending out more details in the coming months, but if you are interested in attending the meeting, please send a message to [Ella](#).

This year, our meeting will be adjacent to the ASEC EC Jamboree, which will take place at the same venue on Monday, October 19. If you are not on the ASEC list and would like more information, please email [Kelly Cleland](#).

In this update, we have information about new polling data from young Republicans about their interest in OTC birth control, as well as new features of the Free the Pill website. We also highlight efforts in Oregon and New Zealand to allow pharmacists to prescribe hormonal contraception.

Please let me know if you have any questions or comments about the information below.

Thanks,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dan", is placed below the text "Thanks,".

Daniel Grossman, MD  
Vice President for Research, Ibis Reproductive Health

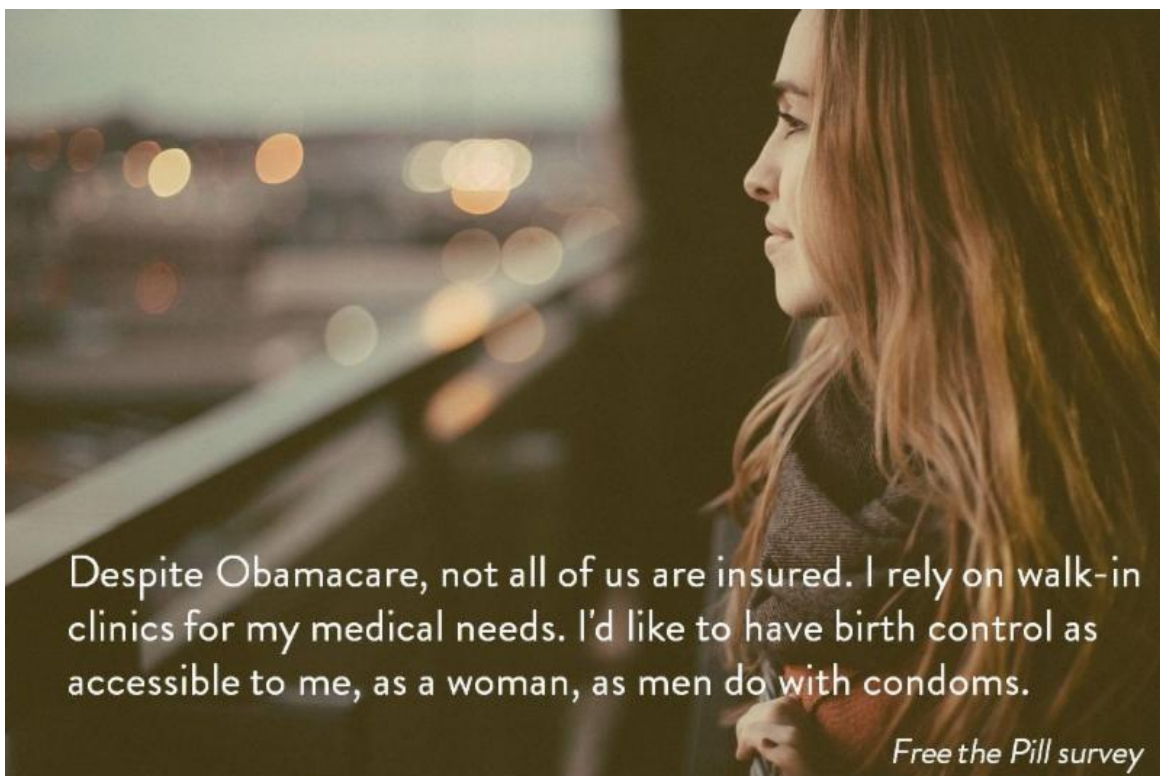
### New polling data on young Republican opinions of OTC birth control

In an effort to better understand how young Republicans feel about contraception and the role it plays in their lives, the [National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned](#)

[Pregnancy](#) recently commissioned [focus groups and a nationally representative survey](#) of young Republican men and women aged 18-34 about their opinions related to contraception, including OTC birth control. Respondents had mixed feelings about making birth control available over-the-counter; 29% of respondents supported OTC birth control instead of requiring insurance coverage for all forms of birth control, 21% supported OTC birth control in addition to requiring insurance coverage for all forms of birth control, 37% did not think birth control pills should be available without a prescription, and 13% were unsure.

Young Republican women identified a number of concerns with making OCs available OTC instead of having an insurance coverage requirement; 35% worried this would reduce options to women who want to use a birth control method that is not available OTC and 25% said they worried that having to pay out of pocket would make birth control unaffordable for some women. As one young Republican woman in the study said of making birth control available OTC, "I never really understood that, why you can get Plan B without a prescription, but you can't get birth control without one."

### Free the Pill's new Voices page



Despite Obamacare, not all of us are insured. I rely on walk-in clinics for my medical needs. I'd like to have birth control as accessible to me, as a woman, as men do with condoms.

*Free the Pill survey*

We are excited to share a new resource on the Free the Pill website--the [Voices page](#).

Over the past few months, we've been fielding [a survey](#) asking women about their thoughts on moving the pill over the counter. So far, we have heard from over 100 women, and we created this page to share their thoughts and perspectives.

We will continue to update the Voices page as new responses come in--so keep checking back! And please share the survey so that we can expand our reach and hear from more women: <http://freethepill.org/free-the-pill/>.

### **Survey on insurance coverage for OTC birth control**

Under the Affordable Care Act, most private health insurance plans must cover OTC and prescription birth control for women with no additional costs, including co-payments, coinsurance, or deductibles. Although OTC methods are covered, insurance companies may require a prescription to trigger coverage. Current OTC contraceptive methods for women include female condoms, foam or spermicide, the sponge, and emergency contraception (male condoms are not covered because men are not included in the women's preventive services guidelines of health care reform).

**We want to hear from women who have tried to get health insurance coverage for OTC contraceptive methods (female condoms, foam or spermicide, the sponge, and emergency contraception) since January 1st, 2013, when the health care law went into effect.**

We have developed a survey for women to share their experiences, including whether they were able to use their health insurance to cover these methods, and the process they went through. This information will help us to better understand how accessible insurance coverage is for current OTC methods, and to anticipate what women's experiences may be like for a future OTC pill.

**You can find the survey here:** <http://freethepill.org/surveys/>

We hope that you can help to spread the word by sharing the message above!

### **Oregon Pharmacy Access Bill**

This month, Rep. Knute Buehler, R-Bend and a physician, introduced an [amendment](#) to the House Bill 2028, which would have allowed pharmacists to prescribe and dispense oral contraceptives in Oregon. The bill is similar to a law that was passed in California in 2013. The amendment would require that pharmacists hand out a self-screening risk assessment tool before writing a prescription, and only people age 18 or older would be eligible.

The bill was scheduled for a vote in the House's health care committee on April 17th, but was tabled. According to Oregon Live, Rep. Buehler plans to revisit the proposal when the bill moves to the Senate later this year.

You can read more about the bill here:

- [Knute Buehler's common-sense contraception proposal: Editorial agenda 2015](#)
- [Access to birth control: Oregon lawmaker would let women skip doctor's visit](#)

### **Proposal to allow pharmacists to prescribe OCs in New Zealand will be reviewed**

As noted in previous updates, a pharmacy chain in New Zealand submitted a request to reclassify several formulations of oral contraceptives to be able to be prescribed by pharmacists. The New Zealand Medicines and Medical Devices Safety Authority will have a committee meeting on May 5 to review the application. Of note, the New Zealand Medical Association and the Royal New Zealand College of General Practitioners oppose the proposed reclassification, and their comments can be seen [here](#) (along with some in support, including a letter from Dan Grossman). Below are several online articles about the reclassification:

- [Call to make pill over-the-counter](#)
- [Committee to mull making birth control pills available over the counter](#)
- [Poll: Should the contraceptive pill be available over-the-counter?](#)

### OCs OTC featured at Take Root conference

OCs OTC was a topic at the fifth annual [Take Root: Red States Perspectives on Reproductive Justice](#) conference, which took place in February in Norman, Oklahoma. Ibis's Vice President for Development and Public Affairs Britt Wahlin was on a panel about health care access and reproductive justice and spoke about the Working Group's efforts to move an OC OTC as part of a broader vision to improve all women's access to the full range of contraceptive methods. She highlighted [Free the Pill](#) and opinions about OCs OTC that women have submitted to the website, and, given the attention this topic received during November's midterm elections, discussed the FDA's authority for approving an OTC pill (a process that does not involve legislation or Congress). She also addressed the importance of red state activist engagement in efforts to ensure that a future OTC pill is affordable, covered by insurance, and available to women of all ages.

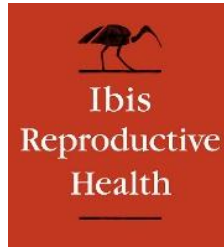
### Welcome to new groups signing on to the Working Group's statement of purpose!

Over 45 organizations have signed on to the Working Group's [statement of purpose](#), with the most recent ones being the [National Association of Nurse Practitioners in Women's Health \(NPWH\)](#) and the [American College of Nurse-Midwives](#). Thanks for your support! If your organization has not yet signed on and is interested, please send an email to [Ella](#).

### About us

The Oral Contraceptives (OCs) Over-the-Counter (OTC) Working Group is an informal coalition of reproductive health and rights organizations, nonprofit research and advocacy groups, university-based researchers, and prominent clinicians who share an interest in women's health and access to contraception. Our goal is to evaluate objectively the risks and benefits of demedicalizing contraceptive care, with an eye toward improving access to OCs and potentially other hormonal contraceptive methods by making them available without a prescription.

The Working Group is coordinated by Ibis Reproductive Health.



[www.ibisreproductivehealth.org](http://www.ibisreproductivehealth.org)

## Contact us

**For questions or inquiries, please contact us at:**

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