

April 29, 2016

## In This Update

[Save the date!](#)

[Pharmacy access to hormonal contraception in CA](#)

[About us](#)

[Contact us](#)

## Dear Working Group Member,

In this newsletter, we provide an update about the new law in California allowing people to obtain hormonal contraceptives at a pharmacy without a prescription from a clinician. We are also happy to share that we have a date for our next general meeting of the Oral Contraceptives Over-the-Counter Working Group. The meeting will take place on Tuesday, September 20, in Washington, DC. So please mark your calendars! You can find more information below.

Finally, we are happy to announce that [Kate Grindlay](#) has been hired as the new Project Director of the Free the Pill project, in which she will be helping to oversee the implementation of our ambitious program of work to move an oral contraceptive pill over the counter in the United States. Please join us in welcoming Kate in this new role.

If you have any questions or comments about the information presented here, please let us know.

Thanks,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dan".

Daniel Grossman, MD  
Professor in the Department of Obstetrics, Gynecology and Reproductive Sciences at the University of California, San Francisco and Senior Advisor, Ibis Reproductive Health

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Britt".

Britt Wahlin  
Vice President for Development and Public Affairs,  
Ibis Reproductive Health

## Save the date!

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, September 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 [Carmela](#).

Following our working group meeting, the EC Jamboree, the annual meeting of the American Society for Emergency Contraception (ASEC) and the International Consortium for Emergency Contraception (ICEC), will be held on Wednesday, September 21 and Thursday, September 22 in Washington, DC. The first day of the EC Jamboree will focus on clinical research updates and program and policy work in the US, Canada and Europe. The second day will focus on EC work in other regions. Please contact [Kelly Cleland](#) or [Elizabeth Westley](#) with any questions.

## Pharmacy access to hormonal contraception in California

[This month](#), a new [law](#) went into effect allowing people of all ages in California to obtain hormonal contraceptives at a pharmacy without a prescription from a clinician. The law, passed by the legislature in October 2013, authorizes pharmacists to prescribe and dispense self-administered birth control methods, which includes pills, patches, vaginal rings, and Depo-Provera injections.

Although the new bill makes it easier for people to access birth control, it falls short of making hormonal contraceptives available over the counter since it requires them to first consult a pharmacist. Before obtaining any birth control method, people must complete a questionnaire about their medical history so a pharmacist can screen for conditions that may increase risks of certain types of contraceptives for them. If a client is considering a method containing estrogen, her blood pressure will also be checked. Once a birth control method is chosen, the client will receive counseling about the dosage, effectiveness, and potential side effects of the contraceptive prescribed to them. Pharmacists will also provide clients with a fact-sheet about the various types of hormonal contraception products currently available and will recommend a visit to their doctor or clinic for follow-up care.

California and Oregon are currently the only two states where pharmacists can independently prescribe birth control, and pharmacists in the state of Washington will be authorized to do the same beginning in [June](#). The [District of Columbia](#) and eleven other states--[Alaska](#), [Hawaii](#), [Illinois](#), [Iowa](#), [Massachusetts](#), [Missouri](#), [New Jersey](#), [New York](#), [South Carolina](#), [Tennessee](#), and [Wisconsin](#)--have introduced similar legislation, although these laws vary in scope, including in regard to patient age restrictions and the types of hormonal contraceptives pharmacists are allowed to prescribe. Iowa's bill, for example, would allow people of all ages to obtain birth control pills from a pharmacist, whereas the law in the neighboring state of Illinois would permit people over the age of 18 to have access to contraceptive pills and patches.

You can find the health screening questionnaire and regulations for pharmacists prescribing hormonal contraceptives in California [here](#). Below are several recent articles on California's new law:

LA Times: [What you need to know about California's new birth control law](#)

San Jose Mercury: [California pharmacists can now provide birth control to women](#)

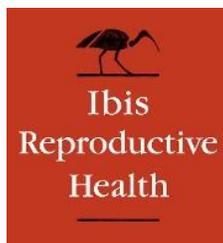
The Daily Californian: [Hormonal birth control to be available in local pharmacies without prescription](#)

The Orange County Register: [Local pharmacies not putting new birth control law into practice](#)

## About us

The Oral Contraceptives (OCs) Over-the-Counter (OTC) Working Group is a coalition of reproductive health, rights, and justice organizations, nonprofit research and advocacy groups, university-based researchers, and prominent clinicians who share a commitment to providing all women of reproductive age easier access to safe, effective, acceptable, and affordable contraceptives. The working group was established in 2004 to explore the potential of over-the-counter access to oral contraceptives to reduce disparities in reproductive health care access and outcomes, and to increase opportunities for women to access a safe, effective method of contraception, free of unnecessary control, as part of a healthy sexual and reproductive life.

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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