



October 7, 2016

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## Dear OCs OTC Working Group Member,

In this update, you will find an overview of topics discussed at the annual OCs OTC Working Group meeting and the introduction of our subcommittee co-chairs. Thank you for helping to make our meeting a success. We are grateful for your active engagement in the meeting and working group as a whole. We also applaud Robyn Elliott, this year's recipient of the Ellertson Award for Innovation in Emergency Contraception for her work to advance the Contraceptive Equity Act in Maryland. Below we provide a great overview of the Women's Preventive Services Initiative by working group member Adam Sonfield of the Guttmacher Institute. Thanks to all of you who submitted comments on the draft recommendations for updating the women's preventive services insurers are required to cover without cost sharing under the Affordable Care Act. In addition, we would like to share that California's Medicaid program (Medi-Cal) will now reimburse pharmacists for their services when they are prescribing OCs and other hormonal contraception, among other medications they are authorized to prescribe. Finally, we are excited to share a resource with you on progestin-only pills (POPs). This document will help our colleagues who are unfamiliar with POPs understand why the working group is currently focused on moving this type of pill OTC.

As always, please let me know if you have any questions or comments!

Thank you,



Kate Grindlay  
Project Director/Associate  
Ibis Reproductive Health

### 2016 OCs OTC Working Group meeting

Our annual OCs OTC Working Group meeting took place on September 20, 2016 in Washington, DC. We had approximately 90 participants in attendance, making it our largest working group meeting ever. Topics covered during the meeting included reproductive justice perspectives on OCs OTC, developments on contraceptive access for young people, an overview of a national survey on women's interest in using an OTC progestin-only pill, updates on policy developments, and a presentation on key messages about OCs OTC. Additionally, we had the kick-off meeting for our four new working group subcommittees, led by their co-chairs. You can find the meeting agenda [here](#). If you would like more information about the meeting, please let [Mary](#) know.

### Introducing OCs OTC working group subcommittee co-chairs

Over the past few months, we have been updating you on the development of our new working group structure. Our four subcommittees (Communications, Policy/Insurance, Research, and Young People) will guide our working group through our efforts to make a birth control pill available in the US. We are thrilled to have the new subcommittee co-chairs onboard. Please join us in welcoming them!

#### **Communications:**

Belle Taylor-McGhee, Reproductive Justice/Reproductive Health Advocate and Writer  
Britt Wahlin, Ibis Reproductive Health

#### **Policy/Insurance:**

Sarah Christopherson, National Women's Health Network  
Pam Kingfisher, Native American Community Boards Native Women's Reproductive Justice Program

### Research:

Dan Grossman, Advancing New Standards in Reproductive Health/UCSF and Ibis Reproductive Health

Beth Raymond, Gynuity Health Projects

### Young People:

Melissa Kottke, University of Georgia

Aimee Thorne-Thomsen, Advocates for Youth

Tracey Wilkinson, Indiana University

## Ellertson Award for Innovation in EC



Britt Wahlin and Robyn Elliott

We would like to congratulate this year's winner of the Ellertson Award for Innovation in Emergency Contraception (EC), Robyn Elliott, who led the efforts to advance [Maryland's Contraceptive Equity Act](#). The law's provision will require insurance to cover OTC contraceptive medications without requiring a prescription. In addition to improving EC access, this will have a substantial impact when the FDA approves an OTC birth control pill.

The Ellertson Award for Innovation in EC is awarded by the American Society for Emergency Contraception (ASEC) and the International Consortium for Emergency Contraception (ICEC) in honor of "an individual or organization who has demonstrated bold and innovative thinking and action in the realm of emergency contraception. This award was established in memory of ASEC [and Ibis Reproductive Health] founder, Charlotte Ellertson."

## Comprehensive reference for WPSI proposed updates



In our last update, we explained how the Women's Preventive Services Initiative aims to update the Women's Preventive Services Guidelines for most private insurers in the US, and includes a new recommendation for coverage of OTC contraceptives without a prescription. Although the public comment period is now closed, this post from the [Health Affairs blog](#) gives a broad overview of the other guidelines under review.

## California pharmacist-prescribed coverage and dispensing privileges increase



California recently passed a bill that will reimburse pharmacists for their time when prescribing medications to beneficiaries on Medi-Cal, California's Medicaid program, including for hormonal contraceptives, nicotine replacement products for smoking cessation, CDC-recommended travel medicines, and the opioid overdose drug naloxone. This new legislation to cover pharmacists' time helps to ensure sustainability, and addresses a barrier to pharmacist-prescribed OCs and other hormonal methods. Previously, there was a lack of incentive for pharmacists in California to prescribe hormonal contraceptives, since implementation in April 2016. Oregon, for example, already reimburses pharmacists for their OC prescription services. The California Pharmacists Association is now working to secure reimbursement for other insurance programs, as well as for additional services in Medi-Cal. See [this article](#) from the California Pharmacists Association for more information.

California also passed a bill that will allow pharmacists to dispense up to a 12-month supply of OCs at the patient's request and requires insurance to cover it. The bill will go into effect on January 1, 2017. See [here](#) for the full bill from the CA legislature.

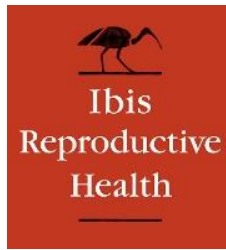
## Increasing OC access with an OTC progestin-only pill

We have a new document that serves as a resource for our efforts to make a progestin-only pill (POP) available over the counter in the US, "Over-the-counter birth control: background on progestin-only pills." This resource gives background on POPs and why the OCs OTC Working Group has reached consensus that a POP is the best option for the first OTC OC in the United States. POPs present the fewest barriers to the greatest population. Furthermore, FDA approval of an OTC POP will likely be faster and more direct because the FDA has already approved progestin-only emergency contraception for OTC sale. This document also includes a Q&A that can be shared with colleagues, media, and the general public. You can find it [here](#).

## 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

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