

March 8, 2016

In This Update

[CRR releases report on OCs OTC](#)

[Communications and Outreach Manager job posting](#)

[Pelagius focuses on OTC switch for a combined pill](#)

[NYC Bar Association urges action on OCs OTC](#)

[Pharmacist prescribing hormonal birth control update](#)

[Insurance coverage of 12-month supplies of hormonal contraception](#)

[News coverage of mobile apps providing contraception](#)

[About us](#)

[Contact us](#)

Dear Working Group Member,

In this update, we are pleased to share with you a new report entitled "Over the counter: The next big step for birth control" that was issued recently by the Center for Reproductive Rights. We also include information about a new initiative aimed at bringing a combined oral contraceptive OTC in the US. In addition, we have several policy updates related to improving access to hormonal contraception.

Finally, Ibis is hiring for a new Communications and Outreach Manager to coordinate and support the communications, partnership, and policy activities of the OCs OTC Working Group--we hope you will share this with your networks!

Please let us know if you have any questions or comments about the information presented here.

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

New report on OCs OTC released by the Center for Reproductive Rights

The Center for Reproductive Rights explores the issue of OCs OTC in their new [report](#): "Over the counter: The next big step for birth control." Released in February, the report provides an overview of the context, legal process, and critical policy considerations for making the switch from prescription to OTC status for oral contraceptives. It also highlights much of the work of the OCs OTC Working Group to make the case for moving a birth control pill over the counter in the United States.

You can download the full report [here](#).

Spread the word! Seeking a Communications and Outreach Manager

Ibis is seeking a Communications and Outreach Manager to coordinate and support the communications, partnership, and policy activities of the OCs OTC Working Group. The Communications and Outreach Manager will work closely with reproductive justice organizations and other members of the OCs OTC Working Group to design and implement strategies and activities to ensure that a future OTC OC is affordable and accessible to all. S/he will also support communications activities and platforms, including the Free the Pill and working group websites and associated social media handles. This position is based in Cambridge, MA. We will prioritize reviewing applications received by March 21, 2016. View the full job description [here](#).

Pelagius focuses on OTC switch for a combined pill

Working group member Dr. Malcolm Potts [intends to pursue an over-the-counter switch](#) for a combined oral contraceptive (COC) pill through his new company, Pelagius, which recently acquired a COC product. Dr. Potts is a professor at University of California, Berkeley, and a longtime advocate for moving OCs over the counter.

The OCs OTC Working Group is currently focused on moving a progestin-only pill (POP) over the counter and is actively seeking a pharmaceutical partner to join us in the effort. POPs have a hormonal formulation that is similar to levonorgestrel emergency contraception, which is available over the counter, making them a logical candidate for the first daily use OTC pill. Both COCs and POPs are very safe, though women with hypertension, who are 35 and older who smoke, or who have some other health conditions are advised not to use COCs due to the estrogen contained in them. Contraindications to POPs are few and rare. Evidence strongly suggests that both types of pills are safe and should be available over the counter.

We look forward to hearing more about Pelagius's plans and progress, and we will continue to keep you posted about the efforts of Pelagius and others seeking an OTC switch for OCs. While we are aiming for a POP as the first OTC OC product, we envision a future in which COCs are alongside POPs in everyone's local drugstore and supermarket.

New York City Bar Association urges that action be taken on OCs OTC

In February, the New York City Bar Association sent letters to Governor Cuomo and the New York State Department of Health, as well as to the US Food and Drug Administration, urging that action be taken to give OCs OTC status. The letters were written by the City Bar's Committees on Science & Law and Sex & Law.

The letter to Governor Cuomo and the New York State Department of Health is available [here](#).

The letter to the FDA is available [here](#).

Pharmacist prescribing hormonal birth control update

Since our last working group message, Iowa has joined the list of states considering allowing pharmacists to prescribe hormonal birth control, except unlike other states, Iowa's bill includes OCs only. Under the Iowa bill, pharmacists could prescribe and dispense birth control pills to females of any age.

You can read more about the Iowa proposal [here](#).

States introduce legislation mandating insurance coverage of 12-month supplies of hormonal contraception

In January, a [new law](#) went into effect in Oregon that requires insurers to cover a 12-month supply of hormonal birth control (including the pill, patch, and ring) at the same time. While Oregon is the first state to implement such a bill, Washington, DC, passed a [similar bill](#) in 2015, but it is not slated for implementation until 2017--and a number of states are following their lead. [Alaska](#), [Hawaii](#), [Wisconsin](#), and [California and Washington state](#) have introduced 12-month prescribing bills that are under consideration. [Iowa](#) has introduced a bill for women on Medicaid to receive a 12-month prescription for hormonal contraceptives and is considering similar legislation for private insurers.

Typically, insurers cover 30- to 90-day refills for hormonal contraception. However, research shows that when women have better access to OCs, they stay on the method longer. [Data from California](#) demonstrated that women given 13 pill packs at the time of initiation continued the method significantly longer compared to those given only one or three packs, and women given a one-year supply of OCs were less likely to experience unintended pregnancy or obtain abortions compared to women given one or three packs. [Another study](#) found that when women were randomized to receive seven pill packs at once (versus three packs), women had significantly higher six-month continuation rates, and this effect was especially pronounced among adolescents under the age of 18.

News coverage of mobile apps providing contraception

As we have noted in previous email updates and at the working group meeting last October, several online and mobile health platforms have been launched to provide oral contraceptives. Below are several recent articles highlighting these models:

Buzzfeed: [Now you can get birth control through these apps](#)

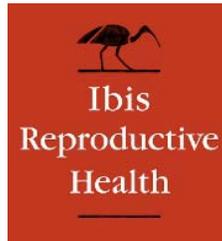
Fusion: [There's finally an Uber for birth control](#)

Mic: [This awesome service will literally deliver birth control pills right to your door](#)

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

Contact us

For questions or inquiries, please contact us at:

Ibis Reproductive Health
1330 Broadway, Suite 1100
Oakland, CA 94612
Tel.: 510-986-8932
Fax: 510-986-8960
Email: OCsOTC@ocsotc.org

www.OCsOTC.org

[Facebook](#)