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Abstract Gynecur

In France, the incidence of unwanted pregnancies (1/3 of the total number of pregnancies) is a public health concern. Despite the fact that 75% of French women use a modern contraceptive method and the availability of products in case of unprotected sexual intercourse, the number of elective terminations is relatively high. In March 2012, HRA-Pharma together with the BVA Institute performed a survey about the perception of emergency contraception (EC) on a representative sample of 2 500 women, aged 16-45.

Among those women who admitted to have had not or badly protected intercourse (37% of those who had intercourse during the last 12 months), only 20% used EC. The main reason of this insufficient use was a misperception of the risk of pregnancy. This survey also confirmed that the women expect to receive more information on EC by health professionals while they wish to get it directly from the pharmacist. Another survey amongst French gynecologists, called GYNECUR, was made in collaboration with the French Society of Gynecology (SFG) and the National Federation of Colleges of Medical Gynecology (FNCGM). More than 500 gynecologists participated. They were mainly women, with an average age of 57.

Answering to a demand of emergency contraception occurs several times per month for 65% of the gynecologists. The oral hormonal method is always preferred over the IUD.

The vast majority of gynecologists consider that they are adequately informed on EC. They are quite conscious of their important preventive role in this matter. In case of need, they send their patients to a pharmacist who provides the EC. According to 70% of the gynecologists, women in general do not know how to identify situations that put them at risk and are not enough informed about EC. The gynecologists underestimate women's culpability about using EC : 2/3 of the women consider that the use of EC reveals their imprudence and 1/5 of them even declare that they would feel ashamed.

Globally, gynecologists and women's perceptions of EC seem quite comparable, in particular on two aspects (1) the progress EC represents for women and (2) using EC is a responsible act by women. These two surveys conclude that there is an important need to inform women about emergency contraception and situations that put them at risk of unwanted pregnancies.

This will hopefully increase the proper use of EC to avoid more unwanted pregnancies.