We called 119 pharmacies: emergency contraception is still difficult to source for women

RapitaToday investigator knew that the morning-after pill is hard to find on Sundays, a call was made to investigate if access is still difficult to source in Malta. Here are our findings.

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We performed an unstructured and unannounced observation of pharmacies to ascertain whether they sell emergency contraception.

We phoned 119 pharmacies on Sundays at 7am - the time of our first observation last year - to simulate a scenario where someone seeks to source the morning-after pill. We were shortly directed to the nearest facility.

A pharmacy on the outskirts of Valletta was the first to return our call and stated they do not sell the morning-after pill. One day earlier, an identical report was made, although we were told to call again and the pharmacy would then sell it.

We phoned each pharmacy on the roster to ascertain availability. However, the roster system is broken, with pharmacies coming off the roster and not being replaced, we are told.

While there is a pharmacy on roster for each of the 12 areas in Malta and Gozo, it is not monolithically staffed by the same person each Sunday. The roster is released in December, for next year's three Sundays.

Despite the fact that pharmacies are not required to sell the morning-after pill, they are required to provide information on family planning. The 119 pharmacies were phoned to ascertain whether they sell the morning-after pill.