



# Behind the Counter: A National Look at Access to and Availability of Plan B OTC in Pharmacies

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## Background

The Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) August 2006 decision to make Plan B EC available without a prescription for consumers 18 and older changed the landscape for EC access nationwide. While consumers (both women and men) age 18 and over (with proof of age) can obtain Plan B over the counter (OTC) without a prescription, women under 18 are still required to have a prescription to obtain EC.

## Rationale

To gain a perspective about Plan B availability in pharmacies nationwide, Pharmacy Access Partnership conducted a national online survey for pharmacists to share experiences and perspectives on providing EC under the new FDA guidelines, and other reproductive health services.

## Goal

We sought to determine the availability and accessibility of EC in pharmacy settings and to build an understanding of pharmacists' experiences in EC provision post-FDA decision to make Plan B OTC.

## Objectives

- Assess pharmacists' attitudes toward providing EC to women, men, and teens
- Determine barriers to access, particularly for teens
- Determine average cost of Plan B
- Assess pharmacists' understanding of EC mechanism of action
- Understand pharmacists' interest in pharmacy access model for EC and other hormonal contraception
- Determine strategies to promote increased access to EC for women of all ages

## Outreach Methodology

- Contacted each director at state pharmacy associations
- Outreached to national pharmacy associations to disseminate
  - National Alliance of State Pharmacy Associations (NASPA)
  - American Pharmacists Association (APhA)
  - National Community Pharmacists Association (NCPA)
- Posted confidential 22-question survey online on Zoomerang
  - May 15 – June 22, 2007
  - Survey incentive: offered I-Pod Nano raffle

Reproductive Health Survey - Map of Pharmacist Participants



## Some Associations' Reasons For Not Disseminating Survey

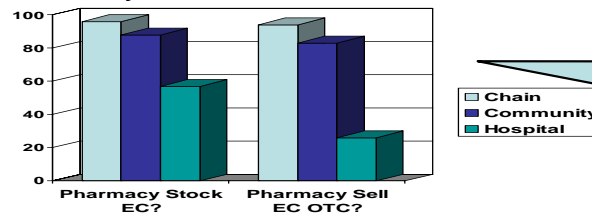
- Despite new OTC availability, EC still a sensitive topic in pharmacy community due to negative media attention about pharmacist refusal issue
- Already collaborating with local school of pharmacy/pharmacy organization on related topic
- Policy to not disseminate surveys from external organizations

## Lessons Learned

- Involve pharmacy-based organizations in initial survey development methodology
- Helpful to have allies internal to pharmacy-based organization to shepherd survey deployment and data collection
- Despite new OTC availability, EC a sensitive topic in pharmacy community due to negative media attention about pharmacist refusal
- Pharmacist education and outreach about EC is still important to dispel myths and increase awareness
- Email communication most effective with pharmacists if sent via direct email from state association director

Majority of pharmacists say demand for EC now is same or higher.

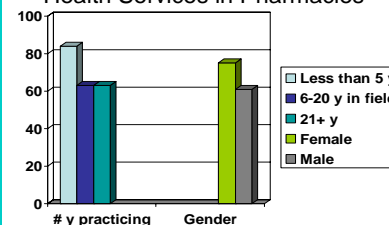
## Select Survey Results



Chain pharmacies report stocking EC even more than those identified as community pharmacies.

- In a state like CA, that invested in EC pharmacy access, the overwhelming majority of pharmacists stock EC OTC.
  - 9 out of 10 pharmacies in California stock EC OTC ; 7 out of 10 do in other states.
- More than 50% of all respondents (both men and women) would be comfortable providing EC services to women under 18 if OTC restrictions were removed. The longer the pharmacist was in the field, the more likely to feel comfortable serving youth.
- Reasons some pharmacists indicate not stocking EC OTC: lack of consumer demand, ethical objection, store policy.

## Interest in Providing Reproductive Health Services in Pharmacies



## Call To Action

- Much work is needed to continue to educate consumers and providers to provide timely access to EC.

Thanks to Diana Greene-Foster for help with data analysis. For more information, contact Nicole Monastersky Maderas nmaderas@phi.org