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January 20, 2004

Mark B. McClellan, MD, PhD  
Commissioner of Food and Drugs  
United States Food and Drug Administration  
5630 Fishers Lane  
Rockville, MD 20857-0001

Dear Dr. McClellan:

We are writing on behalf of the 11,000 clinicians, researchers, and educators who are members of the Association of Reproductive Health Professionals (ARHP) to express the organization's support for over-the-counter status for Plan B, an emergency contraceptive pill (ECP).

ARHP members are very concerned about recent efforts from members of Congress to urge rejection of the strong recommendation of a joint meeting of two advisory committees to allow Plan B to be sold without a prescription. In December, the reproductive health advisory committee and nonprescription drug committee voted 23 – 4 that scientific research demonstrates that ECPs are appropriate for over-the-counter use. More than 70 medical and advocacy organizations signed on to a letter in support of switching Plan B to over-the-counter status.

As with all credible organizations in the scientific community, ARHP promotes scientific independence, integrity, and an evidence-based approach to public policy decision-making. ARHP recently drafted a statement and petition, *Preserving Core Values in Science*, asking the federal government to reaffirm its commitment to using accepted, independent scientific values to make public health policy. We encourage the FDA to make a decision based on the sound, scientific research that shows ECPs to be an extremely safe, effective, and needed product that should be available over-the-counter.

Unintended pregnancy is a major public health issue that has negative consequences for individuals and society.<sup>1</sup> In the United States, nearly half of all pregnancies are unintended." Researchers have estimated that if ECPs were widely available, rates of unintended pregnancy and abortion could be reduced by half."<sup>2</sup> A recent analysis estimated that emergency contraception helped to avert more than 50,000 abortions in 2000-2001 in the United States."<sup>3</sup> Improving access to emergency contraception will help advance the important public health goal of reducing unintended pregnancy.

We encourage you to visit ARHP's *Preserving Core Values in Science* web site ([www.arhp.org/corevalues](http://www.arhp.org/corevalues)), featuring helpful information about the initiative. We also encourage you to visit ARHP's emergency contraception web site at <http://not-2-late.com> for additional information about emergency contraceptive pills. Please contact us if we can ever serve as an expert resource for your staff.

Sincerely,



Lee Lee Doyle, PhD  
Board Chair



Wayne C. Shields  
President and CEO

<sup>1</sup> Brown S, Eisenberg L. The Best Intentions: Unintended Pregnancy and the Well-Being of Children and Families. Washington, DC: National Academy Press; 1995.

<sup>2</sup> Henshaw SK. Unintended pregnancy in the United States. *Fam Plann Perspect*. Jan-Feb 1998;30(1):24-29, 46.

<sup>3</sup> Trussell J, Stewart F, Guest F, et al. Emergency contraceptive pills: a simple proposal to reduce unintended pregnancies. *Fam Plann Perspect*. Nov-Dec 1992;24(6):269-273.

<sup>4</sup> Jones RK, Darroch JE, Henshaw SK. Contraceptive use among U.S. women having abortions in 2000-2001. *Perspect Sex Reprod Health*. Nov-Dec 2002;34(6):294-303.

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