

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS & SURGEONS

DEPARTMENT OF OBSTETRICS AND GYNECOLOGY

February 4, 2004

Mark B. McClellan, MD, PhD

Commissioner of Food and Drugs

U.S. Food and Drug Administration

5600 Fisher Lane

Rockville, Maryland 20857

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Dear Dr. McClellan:

I am writing as a certified obstetrician/gynecologist, to support over-the-counter (OTC) status for Plan B emergency contraceptive pills (ECPs). I have reviewed the scientific literature and believe the evidence clearly supports this change. Attached please find my recent review article on this subject. I agree with the FDA advisory panel's finding that the data shows ECPs to be safe and effective for reducing unintended pregnancy and that it is appropriate for over-the-counter use. I urge you to support OTC access to ECPs.

The sooner emergency contraceptive pills are taken after unprotected intercourse, the more effective they can be. Many women still find it difficult or impossible to get emergency contraception from a provider or health care professional in time. Like most of my colleagues, I am not available to provide it 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

The evidence is clear: ECPs should be available over the counter for the women who can benefit. All women deserve the opportunity to safely and effectively protect themselves from unintended pregnancy.

Sincerely,



Carolyn Westhoff, MD, FACOG

Professor of Obstetrics and Gynecology

Professor of Population & Family Health

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