Let’s talk about sex

Results from an anonymous online survey to better understand women’s experiences with unprotected sex and their knowledge and use of emergency contraception.

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Children by Choice Conference
Brisbane, QLD
August 2017
Let’s talk about sex survey

• Anonymous online survey
• 512 women of reproductive age (15 – 45 years)
• Designed to investigate:
  – women’s awareness and understanding of ovulation and fertility
  – women’s awareness, understanding and attitudes regarding emergency contraception
  – women’s experiences with unprotected sex and use of emergency contraception
Contraceptive use

- Most common method of contraceptive use was condoms (37%), followed by OCP (35%)
- 22% were using more than one method of contraception
- 13% were not using any form of contraception
Understanding of ovulation and fertility

• 22% were unsure about when ovulation occurs
• 48% of respondents correctly indicated that ovulation cannot be accurately predicted based on the days of the menstrual cycle
• Assuming sperm can survive up to 5 days in the female reproductive tract, approximately 78% selected a different answer
• Approx half (48%) of women underestimated how long sperm can survive in the female reproductive tract
Experience(s) with unprotected sex

• 35% (178/512) experienced at least one instance of UPSI or contraceptive mishap in the previous 12 months
• The younger the age group, the higher the proportion of women having UPSI, with the exception of 40-45 year olds
• 49% (32/65) of 15-19 yo reported UPSI in the last year
Awareness of EC

• 97% (496/512) respondents were aware of post-coital contraception

• 99% (493/496) of these women knew that the emergency contraceptive pill (ECP) can be used for contraception after sex

• Only 13% (64/496) knew that an intrauterine device can also be used for emergency contraception
Understanding of ECP

- Only 25% of the women surveyed correctly identified the mechanism of action of ECP (delaying ovulation)
- 62% (309/496) responded that ECP stops a fertilised egg attaching to the uterus wall
- 14% of respondents believed that ECP has an abortive effect
- 18% unsure
Attitudes towards EC

- 78% (389/496) agree that “it is a responsible choice to prevent an unplanned pregnancy”
- 63% (313/496) agree that “EC should not be a taboo subject or make women feel guilty about using EC”
- 9% (44/496) believe using EC demonstrates irresponsibility with contraception
Attitudes towards EC

- Experiences with health professionals mentioned:
  - “Health practitioners make it seem shameful.”
  - “It is not ok that many pharmacies make you fill out paperwork about your sexual history under the false pretence that it is required by law”
  - “Some pharmacists are patronising to women seeking this option”
Use of ECP

- **49%** (251/512) of all respondents have ever used ECP
- **14%** (73/512) had used ECP in the last year
- 15-19 year olds make up the highest percentage (22%, 14/65) having used ECP in the last year
Use of ECP

- 0.6% (3/512) had used ECP three or more times in the last year
- Most women (84%, 210/251) tried to get EC within 24 hours of UPSI;
- Only 1 woman (0.2%) tried to get EC 72 hours or more after UPSI
Priorities when seeking ECP

- Three quarters (76%) identified **effectiveness** as the **most important** or second most important (15%) factor.
- When weighted for priority, the following priority ranking emerged: effectiveness; when it can be used; HCP recommendation; cost; side effects.
Summary - Let’s talk about sex

- Condoms were the most common method of contraceptive used amongst respondents, closely followed by the pill.
- Over half of the women surveyed were unsure about when ovulation occurs or thought that ovulation was predictable.
- The vast majority agree that EC after UPSI “is a responsible choice to prevent an unplanned pregnancy.”
- Myths and stigma about EC use are prevalent.
- When asked to prioritise factors when seeking ECP, 3/4 of women identified effectiveness as the most important.
Questions?

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Age demographics

Number of respondents

15-19 yo  20-24 yo  25-29 yo  30-34 yo  35-39 yo  40-45 yo