

Faculty of Sexual and Reproductive Healthcare acknowledges formal publication of evidence supporting efficacy of ulipristal (ellaOne®) emergency contraceptive pill

The Lancet paper by Professor Glasier and colleagues adds strength to the evidence for the effectiveness of ulipristal and suggests that ulipristal is a more effective emergency contraceptive than levonorgestrel, the over the counter 'morning after pill' available in the UK.

A meta-analysis of data from two studies shows that ulipristal almost halved the risk of pregnancy compared with levonorgestrel when taken within 120 hours (5 days) of unprotected intercourse. If used within 24 hours of intercourse the risk of pregnancy was reduced by almost two-thirds compared with levonorgestrel.

The copper intrauterine device can also be used as an emergency contraceptive up to 5 days after unprotected intercourse or ovulation and is thought to be the most effective method of emergency contraception. Ulipristal is an alternative option if the IUD is not suitable or a pill is preferred. However, ulipristal is currently less widely available and there are more restrictions on its use compared with levonorgestrel.

Ulipristal was launched onto the UK market in September 2009. It is currently a prescription-only drug. The Faculty's Clinical Effectiveness Unit has produced information on ulipristal in the form of Frequently Asked Questions and an evidence-based Product Review which are freely available on the website (www.fsrh.org). The Lancet paper confirms that ulipristal is a welcome addition to the emergency contraceptive options available to women.

Ends

For more information please contact Dr Louise Melvin, Director of the FSRH Clinical Effectiveness Unit, Sandyford, 2-6 Sandyford Place, Glasgow, G3 7NB.

Email: Louise.melvin@nhs.net or telephone 0141 232 8459.