

Morning-After Pill Now Widely Available to Children in Pharmacies

Girls under the age of consent will now be able to buy the morning-after pill in pharmacies across the U.K.

The drug, which can cause an early-stage abortion, had previously only been available in certain pharmacies to girls over the age of 16.

Norman Wells, Director of the Family Education Trust, warned that the move would encourage young people to engage in sexual activity.

Increase in STIs

Called ellaOne, the drug can be taken up to five days after sexual intercourse. Its increased availability was licensed by the European Medicines Agency.

Mr. Wells told *The Guardian*, "There are plenty of health and social reasons against making ellaOne available to minors."

He said: "The availability of the morning-after pill is encouraging some adolescents to engage in casual sex when they might not otherwise have done so, and the supply of emergency birth control to young people is associated with an increase in sexually transmitted infections."

Questions

A girl wanting to buy the pill will be asked if she would be willing to tell her parents that she has had unprotected sex or whether she would object to someone else telling them.

The pharmacist can then supply the pill if they believe the girl is able to understand the consequences of her decision.

Leading abortion provider BPAS complained that these questions create “barriers” for girls seeking emergency contraception.

Research

In April this year, a U.S. study revealed that greater availability of the morning-after pill increases rates of sexually transmitted diseases.

According to the research, over-the-counter access to the morning-after pill increases rates of sexually transmitted infections by 12 percent for 15- to 44-year-old women and 9 percent for teenagers.

Dr. Peter Saunders, head of the Christian Medical Fellowship, said there were lessons to learn from the study for the U.K.

‘Behavior Change’

He commented that the “best way to counter the epidemic of unplanned pregnancy and sexually transmitted disease is to promote real behavior change.”

Dr. Saunders said: “The government would be well-advised to enter into dialogue with leaders of communities in Britain where rates of sexually transmitted diseases and unplanned pregnancy are low, especially Christian faith communities, to learn about what actually works.”