



Limiting Our Contraceptive Choice

Health Canada guidelines impact availability

Health Canada's *Guidance for Industry: Clinical Development of Steroidal Contraceptives Used by Women* document outlines recommendations for clinical drug trials that exceed those required in Europe and the United States. Such requirements have the potential to discourage related research and block registration of new contraceptive products in Canada.

Azzarello and Collins (May 2004) evaluated the impact of Canada's hormonal contraceptive regulation by implementing a comparative analysis of the availability of products in various countries, along with an evaluation of the time required from submission to approval of a new drug.

It was found that women in Canada have access to 35% of the contraceptive products available worldwide and to 37% of the hormonal contraceptives available worldwide compared to 58% and 59% respectively in the United States; 52% and 54% respectively in the United Kingdom; 44% and 54% respectively in France; and 44% and 50% respectively in Sweden.

Regarding the more recent contraceptive products available worldwide, women in Denmark have the most choice (67% of available products), whereas women in Canada have the least (only 22% of available products). Recently, 11 of 12 oral contraceptive products approved in other countries have either not been submitted for approval in Canada or remain in the Canadian regulatory process.

Source: Azzarello, Dianne and Collins, John. Canadian Access to Hormonal Contraceptive Drug Choices. J Obstet Gynaecol Can 2004;26(5): 489-99.

Private Insurance plan not reimbursing carriers for the PATCH

Most Canadians have access to reimbursement for prescription medications through private insurance plans (third-party insurance), the provincial/territorial drug benefit programs or federal programs for certain groups.

About 60% of Canadians have private insurance for prescription drugs as part of the group health benefits provided by their employers, which usually also cover the employee's family/dependents.

Traditionally, hormonal contraception has been available on most private drug benefit lists. However, that has not been the case for EVRA* on all plans covered by private insurance carriers.

Atlantic Blue Cross has declined coverage for EVRA in its private drug plans thereby impacting many people in Atlantic Canada since ABC is the insurance carrier for the majority of employers in Atlantic Canada. (continued on page 4)

Volunteer of the Year Award

This year the winner of Planned Parenthood Federation of Canada's (PPFC) Janssen Ortho Volunteer of the Year Award is PPMC's own **Leslie Shaw**. After a review of all the nominees from across Canada, Leslie was chosen on the basis of:

1. the history, longevity and scope/breadth of participation on sexual health issues;
2. demonstration of leadership in the community;
3. success in the face of adversity;
4. contribution to sexual health advocacy; and
5. significance of overall contribution to sexual health.

The PPFC committee determined that Leslie's commitment to the issues, strong advocacy and leadership in developing the movement in Nova Scotia combined with her broad experience at the front-line level, fundraising and board level along with her long history positioned Leslie as the top nominee for this year's award. Congratulations to **Leslie** for the great work!!

A LITTLE SIMPLICITY

Is a beautiful thing.



Ask your healthcare provider about a patch option.



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Pr *Evra**



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transdermal system

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**Planned Parenthood Metro Clinic
Suite 201
6009 Quinpool Road
Halifax, NS B3K 5J7**

Thank you very much for your support!

Health Promotion Clearinghouse, continued from Page 2

Make sure you let HPC know about the health promotion work that you are doing in your region so they can be sure to let others know about it too.

Got a question? Send HPC an email (hpcclearinghouse@dal.ca) or call (Toll Free 1-877-890-5094 or in the Halifax area 494-1917). They will try to find the answer. The mandate of the clearinghouse is to link people and organizations involved in health promotion to community resources and expertise. HPC can only do that well if they know what you are thinking, asking and doing.

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This summer PPNS wrote a letter to Atlantic Blue Cross® (ABC) expressing their concern that the insurance company is limiting women's choices re contraceptive methods by not covering the PATCH. ABC responded by stating:

In reviewing Evra the Medication Advisory Panel recommended that the product not be reimbursed under our benefit plans as:

- *There is no difference in efficacy compared to oral contraceptives*
- *The adverse effects associated with the patch are no more or less than with oral contraceptive*
- *There is insufficient evidence that it offers any better compliance than oral contraceptives*
- *There is significant increase in cost.*

An ABC representative did state that the reviewing of products is not a static process and should new information come to light they would always be willing to review new data. Much research has been done and shared with ABC regarding increased compliance with this product, yet they still deny coverage.

If you would like to express your concerns to ABC regarding their decision to not reimburse for Evra, you can send a letter to RJ Gath-ercole, Director, Group Product Management at Atlantic Blue Cross® Care, 644 rue Main Street CP 220/PO Box 220, Moncton, NB E1C 8L3. You can also direct your comments to www.atl.bluecross.ca. For a full list of what can be done to get EVRA listed on a private insurance benefit plan, please visit: www.drugcoverage.ca.

Please consult a physician when choosing a birth control method to ensure you are aware of all possible risks and benefits.

2004 Bentley Award for Excellence of Achievement

This year Planned Parenthood Metro Clinic was selected to receive Planned Parenthood Federation of Canada's (PPFC) 2004 Bentley Award for Excellence of Achievement for the project "Assessing the HIV Prevention Needs of Diverse Communities of Women." The selection committee commented that the project:

- is well described and clear;
- reaches vulnerable women effectively with a good mixture of women for research;
- has an impact that is clear with very good recommendations for more research and work on the issue.

As the PPFC Affiliate selected to receive the award, PPMC will receive a cash prize, a framed award certificate and coverage of the award in the next issue of the PPFC Newsletter as well as an announcement on the PPFC website. Congratulations to Planned Parenthood Metro Clinic!