

FDA Oversteps Authority, Approves Non-Prescription Access to Morning-After Pill

CWA aggressively challenges FDA's flawed decision

Bowling to pressure from pro-abortion lobbies, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) last month cut a deal with a drug company and approved Plan B (a morning-after pill) for sale to people over 18 without a prescription or medical oversight. Concerned Women for America (CWA) had compiled and provided evidence to the FDA, policy-makers, and media that easy access to this poorly studied drug not only fails to lower the number of pregnancies, but has also led to sharp increases in sexually transmitted diseases and abortions.

Advocates claim it will reduce the chance of pregnancy if taken within 72 hours after sexual intercourse. The pill contains *Levonorgestrel*, the same drug used in

other forms of birth control, except Plan B contains a dosage up to 40 times higher than other methods. The low-dosage versions require a prescription. It's the first time in the FDA's history that it has made a high-dosage drug available without a prescription when that same drug requires a prescription at a lower dosage.

"The abortion lobby made easy access to the morning-after pill its top priority, and the FDA buckled under intense pressure from



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Plan B

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abortion activists and politicians,” explains CWA President Wendy Wright, a leading expert on Plan B who has spearheaded CWA’s action on the issue.

The potential health risks to women clearly were set aside, and the promises of fewer pregnancies and abortions a sham, so the only explanation for the FDA’s decision is political and ideological.”

As the first major group to take on the morning-after pill, Concerned Women for America has educated other pro-life groups, the public and legislators about the drug – dispelling the myths circulated by radical pro-abortion groups. Wright also testified at an FDA hearing, informing decision-makers about the lack of medical testing on the drug and societal ramifications of easy access to Plan B.

Other pro-life groups have rallied with CWA’s leadership, and national and state legislators have expressed interest in curbing the FDA’s shameful decision. The battle over Plan B is just heating up.

Abortion advocates use unproven claims to further their agenda

An examination of other countries that made the morning-after pill available without medical oversight shows an increase in abortions after its approval. For example, Scotland made the morning-after pill non-prescription in 1999 and in 2005 reported the highest number of abortions in the country’s history. In England, abortions increased from 176,000 in 2002 to 185,400 in 2004 – after it made the morning-after pill non-pre-

Morning-after fiasco

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Year, to 39,640 in 2004. Professor Glasier, director of family planning at the Lottian Primary Care NHS Trust in Edinburgh, said there was now conclusive evidence from ten studies, including her own research, that the pill had failed.

“At least 60,500 abortions should have been prevented in 2004 since if it worked, she said.

Between 1984 and 2004 abortion rates went up 88 per cent, reaching a record of 390,000, the highest in Western Europe.

The morning-after pill, which can be taken up to 72 hours after unprotected sex, was made available without prescription to over 10s in 2001.

Rising numbers of clinics based at secondary schools offer the morning-after pill to pupils or arrange fast-tracked doctors’ appointments.

But just 12 per cent of all those requesting an abortion in 2002 had tried the pill.

“Despite the clear increase in the use of emergency contraception, abortion rates have not fallen in the UK,” said Professor Glasier, who is also director of sexual and reproductive health at Edinburgh University.

She stressed that she did not want to make it harder for women to get hold of emergency contraception.

“It will prevent pregnancy in some women some of the time – and if you don’t want to get pregnant anything is better than nothing.

“If you are a woman who has had unprotected sex because of a brief condition then of course it is worth it. But not as an intervention that will reduce abortion rates.”

Professor Glasier admitted she receives grants from the emergency contraception manufacturers. Sheering for her educational programmes. Nevertheless she said women should be encouraged to use longer-acting contraceptive methods.

Dr Trevor Stammers, London GP

and spokesman for the Family Educational Trust, said he had written to the British Medical Journal almost five years ago predicting the likely failure of the pill.

He said: “Making the morning-after pill easier to get has had no effect on teenage pregnancies.

“It has fueled the increase in sexually transmitted infections because girls are deprived of medical intervention when they get it over the counter in Tesco.”

Rates of sexually transmitted infections are soaring, with almost 700,000 new diagnoses last year in England alone – up 68 per cent since 1993.

Dr Stammers went on: “It is a blinkered view that complex human behaviour is easily fished with a condom machine in the boys’ last, next to a machine dispensing emergency contraception.”

“This was a central plank of the Government’s Teenage Pregnancy Strategy – which has been very lucrative for emergency contraception manufacturers – but it was wrong from the start.”

A spokesman for the Department of Health said: “Our policy has always been that safe sex, using reliable contraception on a regular basis, is the best way for women to protect against unwanted pregnancy.”

“We are working hard to reduce the demand for abortions and have invested £60million to improve access to contraceptive services nationwide. We have also recently reduced the VAT rate on condoms and other contraceptives – making them cheaper than ever before.”

A spokesman for the Faculty of Family Planning and Reproductive Health Care said emergency contraception was an important back-up.

But Michaela Aston, of LIFE, said: “We now have evidence that the Government’s policy of making the morning-after pill more readily available, particularly to children, will not solve this country’s appalling abortion rate.”

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Plan B is already an international problem.

scription and all ran public campaigns to advertise the drug.

One explanation for this increase is that Plan B lulls women into a false sense of security by allowing them to rely on it as a method of birth control.

In fact, most studies show that it is only “up to 89% percent effective” and quickly follow up with “much more effective in the first 12 hours.” So how effective is it at the 24, 48, or 72 hour mark?

Advocates claim that Plan B is “emergency contraception.” But according to the manufacturer, Barr Pharmaceuticals, Inc., one of the ways the drug works is to “prevent implantation of a fertilized egg” – that

is, an embryo. Yet Barr also claims the drug does not end a pregnancy by defining pregnancy as beginning when an embryo implants in the mother's womb.

There is one group in the United States that would welcome an increase in abortions: so-called "reproductive rights" advocates. Abortion is a money-making business, and a greater number of unintended pregnancies is a useful public relations tool to justify abortions. Coincidentally, the abortion industry is in the forefront demanding that the morning-after pill be easy to obtain.

Many resources are available on the CWA Web site to equip women and medical professionals around the world to know how best to address these issues.

Abuses Inevitable, Despite Meaningless Age Requirement

The supposed requirement that an individual must be 18 to purchase the drug will be less effective than current laws on alcohol or tobacco.

Considering how easy it is for minors to access alcohol, or even to get illegal substances like marijuana, it is clear that underage girls will have no problems securing Plan B, especially since there is no penalty for giving it to a minor.

Easy access to the morning-after pill will also lead to difficult situations for many young women. Little can be done to protect a woman whose boyfriend slips her this pill

without her knowledge. And in those heart-breaking cases where abuse is involved, such as date rape or statutory rape, the perpetrator can now legally obtain a drug to cover his crime.

FDA decision motivates pro-life movement, makes "Plan B" a national issue

The FDA's decision is a disappointment to pro-lifers around the country, but CWA staff is already pushing forward with new strategies.

"I'm glad other groups see the danger, and we are coordinating our efforts for an effective response," explains Wright. "We have already begun work with national and state officials to remedy the situation."

The FDA's unprecedented decision to cut a deal with Barr to make Plan B non-prescription was announced one day before the nomination hearing for Andrew von Eschenbach to be FDA

Commission. This prompted Senators Hillary Clinton (D-New York) and Patty Murray (D-Washington) to drop their objection to his nomination.

CWA continues aggressive campaign; battle over Plan B far from over

Easy access is not enough for abortion
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Plan B

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advocates; they are demanding that tax dollars be spent on publicity campaigns to promote it. The abortion lobby has promised to continue fighting for the removal of age-restrictions on Plan B. As CWA experts point out, the restrictions will do little to keep the drug away from minors. But removing the restrictions altogether undermines parental rights and threatens “age of consent” protections.

On a bright side, Michigan introduced a bill to require a prescription for morning-after pills sold in that state. (You can read Wendy Wright’s testimony on this bill at www.cwfa.org/mimap.pdf). Other model legislation for states is being formulated by legal experts, and a lawsuit challenging the FDA’s unprecedented approval is in the works.

Pro-life legislators are considering the best way to rein in the FDA. Sen. Jim DeMint (R-South Carolina) has put a “hold” on von Eschenbach’s nomination - effectively preventing any action by the Senate. He is demanding von Eschenbach (in his current position as Acting FDA Commissioner) revoke the FDA’s approval of the abortion pill RU-486.

Congress to Address Key Issues

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- **Judges:** Appointing judges who will respect the rule of law and not change it according to their personal opinions is a top priority at CWA. The Senate has shirked its responsibility by failing to confirm many of the president’s nominees. This has, in turn, created backlogs in courts all over the country. The Senate must work to confirm the nominees that the president puts forth.
- **Bioethics:** This year the president vetoed federal funding for embryonic stem cell

“CWA experts are working on national and state efforts to provide protection for women from the morning-after pill. There is still a long road ahead, but there is hope of turning the FDA decision into opportunities for the pro-life successes that will save lives,” concludes Wendy Wright.

CWA is in a unique position as the leading pro-life expert on the morning-after pill to strategically take on this issue. With the prayers and support of CWA members from around the country, we look forward to seeing God work through His people to work all things out for His good.

How you can help: Check CWA’s Web site at www.cwfa.org to find out more about the morning-after pill, and share the information with your friends. Watch for CWA’s updates and alerts on the issue, and be ready to act when the time comes – most likely by contacting your Congressional and state representatives. To become more involved, join a local Prayer Action Chapter (you can find info on our Web site) or start your own! ■

By Terrisa Coobs, graduate of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and intern for BLI in CWA’s Ronald Reagan Memorial Internship Program

research. In the months ahead, look for CWA to urge Congress to pass legislation that bans cloning.

- **Cable Choice:** For too long, customers have had to pay for programs that they find offensive and do not watch. CWA continues to work toward Cable Choice, so that customers could pick and pay for only the channels that they want to watch.

Remember to pray for these and other key issues that will be addressed in Congress over the next few months. ■