



## **Emergency Contraception Bill**

Fact Sheet

### **Background**

The bill combines three components – Emergency Contraception (EC) provided to sexual assault survivors in the emergency room, duty of pharmacies and providers to stock EC and provide it over the counter to those over 17 and fill a prescription for EC, and an awareness program to educate Arizonans about EC.

What is EC? Emergency Contraception pills are a concentrated dosage of birth control pills, approved by the FDA, as a safe and effective way to reduce a woman's chance of becoming pregnant when taken as soon as possible after unprotected sex or contraceptive failure. EC does not cause an abortion and cannot affect an existing pregnancy.

Women should be the ones who make decisions about their reproductive health, not politicians. The ability for a woman to control her own fertility is a fundamental human right.

### **EC in the ER**

This provision of the bill will require hospitals to provide women who are victims of sexual assault with information about Emergency Contraception and make it available to them in order to reduce the risk of pregnancy resulting from rape. Uniform guidelines for all health care providers ensure that women who are in this vulnerable situation must depend on medical staff to give them the best treatment and information, including EC and its prevention of pregnancy.

- The emergency care standards of the American Medical Association (AMA) require that rape survivors are counseled on their risk of pregnancy and offered EC, which can reduce risk of pregnancy by as much as 89 percent.
- Although required by AMA, many doctors and other health care providers neglect or refuse to provide EC. A victim who is not provided EC, further delays treatment by forcing her to seek out and obtain EC on her own, decreasing her chances of avoiding pregnancy.
- This provision in the bill ensures that rape survivors have to the opportunity to choose to prevent a pregnancy and educates women on the use and availability of EC when they need it most.
- This provision supports the medical community's commitment to delivering the best medical care and does not interfere with sexual assault programs already in operation.

- Rape victims should be spared the trauma of an unwanted pregnancy, presenting emotional, physical and financial burdens.
- Statistics show that 25,000 pregnancies occur in this country every year due to rape, and it is estimated that 22,000, or 88 percent, could be avoided with the timely use of EC.
- Approximately 300,000 women are raped every year in the United States. An estimated 19% of adult women in Arizona (363,000 in 2003) have been victims of one or more completed forcible rapes during their lifetime (Ruggiero & Kilpatrick, 2003).

### **Duty to Fill**

This provision of the bill prevents pharmacies and pharmacists from refusing to provide or refer for Emergency Contraception, while respecting their deeply held religious beliefs. Pharmacies and other health care providers will stock EC and make it available to those over 17 and minors with a prescription without discrimination or delay. If a pharmacist has a personal objection, there must be another person on duty who can provide the contraceptive. This bill does not allow pharmacists to place their personal opinions above the needs of patients. This provision does not allow pharmacists to override the medical diagnosis and treatment regimen prescribed by a doctor based on their personal objections.

- According to a study in 2004, anywhere from 60,000 to 120,000 prescriptions for EC are written annually across the country.
- A 2007 Planned Parenthood/Arizona Family Planning Council survey offers insight into EC in Arizona. 14% of responding pharmacies said they do not carry EC for moral reasons. The report also found that 20% of pharmacies in the state do not carry EC.
- EC, when started within 72 hours of unprotected intercourse, greatly reduces a woman's risk of pregnancy. They are more effective the sooner a woman starts taking them.
- The use of EC could prevent an estimated 800,000 abortions every year (Ellertson, et al., 2003; "FDA approves...").

### **EC Awareness**

This provision ensures that women and men are informed about EC and receive the correct information as it relates to Emergency Contraception. This is especially important considering the misinformation and misconception in the community that EC is the same as RU486, the early abortion pill. EC is an essential component of comprehensive health care that should be easily accessible to all women, including those who have experienced contraceptive failure, those who have had unprotected intercourse, and those who have been sexually assaulted.

- The purpose of this provision is to reduce the risk of unintended pregnancy by improving awareness about Emergency Contraception. EC can only be effective if women are informed about and have prompt access to it.
- EC should be included among the choices women have available to them to make responsible choices about the number and spacing of their children.
- The information that will be provided to individuals through this provision would include a description of EC, an explanation of the use, safety, efficacy, and availability of such contraception.

### **The impact of Emergency Contraception**

#### **What we know:**

Without using birth control, 8% of women having unprotected sex will become pregnant.

With EC used within 120 hours, 1.6% will become pregnant.

With EC used within 24 hours, 14% will become pregnant.

#### **What that means:**

For every 1500 women not using EC, 120 will become pregnant.

For every 1500 women using EC, 24 will become pregnant.

For every 1500 women using EC within 24 hours, 2 will become pregnant.

#### **Currently at PPAZ:**

The 13,000 units of EC dispensed a year prevents statistically about 832 unplanned pregnancies per year. Since half of unplanned pregnancies end in abortion this means 416 abortions are prevented.

#### **In the United States:**

10,000,000 acts of sex occur per night.

727,000 acts of unprotected sex occur each night.

If all U.S. women had access to EC within 24 hours....