

A Preference for Emergency Contraception

The Case of
Emergency Contraceptive Pill Use
by Private Sector Clients in Ghana

IMPROVING LIVES
WORLDWIDE

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Study Background

The Historical Context

- ECPs introduced in public sector in 1996
- First dedicated product registered in private sector in 2003

The Current Situation

- Anecdotal reports of repeat purchases in commercial pharmacies
- Unregistered product responsible for most private sector use

The Response

- Conduct fact-finding, formative research with pharmacy-based ECP purchasers
- Bridge ECP users to regular oral contraceptive pills

Study Objectives

- To describe female pharmacy-based ECP purchasers in Greater Accra
- To determine if a planned bridging intervention would succeed with private sector ECP purchasers in Accra

Study Design

Mixed Methods Approach

Quantitative: To describe female pharmacy-based ECP purchasers in Greater Accra

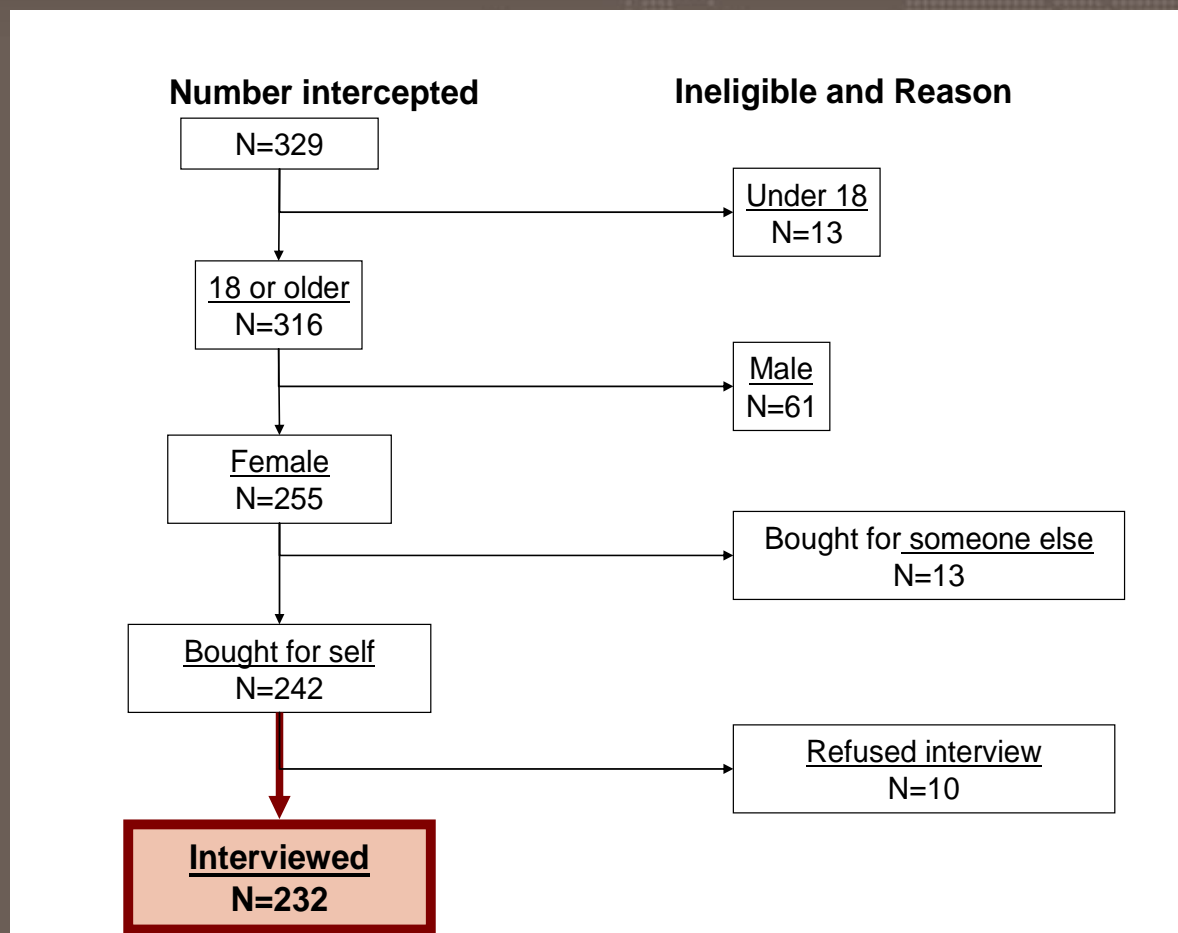
Qualitative: To determine if a planned bridging intervention would succeed with private sector ECP purchasers in Accra

Study Design

Quantitative: To describe female pharmacy-based ECP purchasers in Greater Accra

- All ECP purchasers intercepted at 12 pharmacies
- Interviews conducted with females purchasing for own use
- Survey of user characteristics, ECP and contraceptive use

Flowchart of Pharmacy Intercept Sample



Description of Pharmacy-based Sample

Demographic Characteristics

- Mean age was 25 years
- 61% had no children
- 89% with secondary or higher education
- 44% still in school
- 57% single; 38% in union

ECP and Contraceptive Use


- 59% bought ECPs because used no method
- 83% bought ECPs 2 or more times in the last 12 months
- 35% use ECPs as a main method
- 75% use condoms alone or with other methods
- 65% have sex 2 or more times per week

Study Design

Qualitative: To determine if a planned bridging intervention would succeed with private sector ECP purchasers in Accra

- Females purchasing ECPs for own use intercepted in 5 pharmacies
- Semi-structured interviews with 24 ECP users
- Test messages that encourage switching from ECPs to regular contraception



Selected Panels of Brochure



**Your guide to
regular
contraception after
emergency
contraception**

**Pregnancy
Prevention**

Sponsored by:
Family Health International




**Use regular
contraception after
emergency
contraception**

Congratulations on purchasing emergency contraception pills today! You are taking care of your health by considering your family planning needs.

Emergency contraception is for just that—EMERGENCIES!

It is better to use a regular contraceptive method to prevent pregnancy. Regular contraceptive methods include:

- Birth Control Pills (like My pearl® pills)
- Injectables like Depo
- Implants like Jadelle
- The IUCD



Important!
Take control of your
family planning needs!

**Save emergency
contraception for
emergencies.**

**Use regular contracep-
tion for your ongoing
pregnancy prevention
needs.**



Characteristics of In-depth Interview Sample

Characteristic	Number of participants (N=24)
Age range	
18-24	9
25-29	15
Marital status	
Married	4
Single	20

Characteristic	Number of participants (N=24)
Student status	
University student	7
Non-student	17
ECP use in last yr.	
1-6 times	14
7 or more times	7
Inconclusive	3

Brochure Test Messages

Regular contraception is better than emergency contraception because ...

- It costs less
- It is more effective
- It has fewer side effects
- It lasts for a long time
- It reduces the worry of unprotected sex

Results from In-Depth Interviews

- The cost of ECPs, particularly Postinor-2 is not seen as prohibitive
- Women believed that ECPs were as or even more effective than regular contraceptive methods such as OCPs
- Most women reported that side effects were not troublesome
- Length of effectiveness of regular contraception was not a selling point
- Women believe that ECPs already free them from the worry of pregnancy

Participants Preferred EC to Regular Contraception

- “You see that a condom costs less too but it’s not 100% safe” (**single 24 year old**)
- “I feel normal [after taking ECPs]. I have my normal menstrual flow. I don’t feel anything. It is good to me, that’s why I don’t want to change it” (**single 27 year old student**)
- “Do you know something? Any time I have sex with my husband, I use P2 afterwards, I feel good. I feel relieved” (**married 28 year old student**)
- “I have not experienced any side effects by using Postinor-2 and I don’t think repeated use is going to be a problem. In fact, I don’t see any problem using it repeatedly. As for me, there is no way I would stop using Postinor” (**single 23 year old student**)

Conclusions and Parting Thoughts

- Bridging without educational campaigns would be challenging
- Not all ECP users are appropriate for bridging
- Repeated use of pericoital hormonal method as legitimate contraceptive option
- Potential for undesirable decline in condom use