

# PRESS RELEASE

Subject: Emergency Contraception

U.S. CATHOLIC MEDICAL ASSOCIATION

For Immediate Release

**CONTACT:** Dr. Kathleen Raviele  
2167 Northlake Pkwy  
STE 10  
Tucker GA. 30084-4103  
Phone 770 491-0255  
E-Mail: raviele@cathmed.org

The Catholic Medical Association, the largest professional organization of Catholic physicians in the U.S., concurs with the American Association of Pro-Life Obstetrician-Gynecologists and the Christian Medical Association that it would be a serious error to make emergency contraceptives over the counter. There are several reasons why the FDA should not bend to the pressure being placed on it by Barr Pharmaceuticals and certain politicians.

Today, there is no pharmaceutical-grade hormone available without a physician's prescription, not even a vaginal cream. This would set a dangerous precedent. Plan B is equivalent to taking 20 "mini" birth control pills over a 24-hour period and we do not know the effect on a woman of doing this. Until the Women's Health Initiative by NIH we thought hormone replacement was safe. It has significant side effects. In fact it has been proposed that low dose RU486 would be a better emergency contraceptive. Plan B over the counter would allow RU486 to be offered in the future without medical supervision.

The drug may interrupt ovulation, but as it can be taken up to 3 days after sexual contact and still be effective, it also has been shown for over 30 years to alter the endometrium and prevent implantation of a human blastocyst. Those who respect the sanctity of human life would not choose to take this drug; however, the package insert reassures a woman that it does not cause an abortion. Life does not begin at implantation, it begins at fertilization.

In Scotland, Plan B was made available over the counter from 1990 to 1999, and abortions increased in every age group. It will not decrease abortions as proposed. In Washington State, when EC was made available in a pilot program in pharmacies, the rate of chlamydia increased 56% over the next five years, when in the years before the trend had been declining.

Plan B is only 75% effective at preventing a clinically detected pregnancy. Most other therapies on the market are 80% or more effective. However, it will give a woman a false sense of security as she is coerced or chooses to engage in high risk sexual behavior. Without a physician's supervision, women will purchase this drug unnecessarily at a time in their cycle when they could not get pregnant, anyway. Without an exam and counseling they may escape the detection of an STD or abnormal Pap smear, leading to subsequent infertility, ectopic pregnancy, pelvic pain and cervical cancer. However, selling it over the counter will make Barr Pharmaceuticals a tidy profit at the expense of the health and well-being of the women of America.

Kathleen M. Raviele, MD FACOG  
Vice-President, Catholic Medical Association