

17 November 2006

For sexual and reproductive health

Promote emergency contraception to young people

Family Planning Queensland (FPQ) has backed a call for increased promotion of emergency contraception (EC) to young people following South Australian research finding the so-called 'morning-after pill' was a mystery to most young people.

Yesterday, Dr Helen Calabretto from the University of South Australia released the results of her survey of 600 male and female university students about EC which found that:

- 75 per cent incorrectly thought EC could only be used the morning after unprotected sex
- only 19 per cent knew EC could be used up to five days after sex
- only 38 per cent knew EC could be purchased without a prescription at pharmacies
- 50 per cent incorrectly thought EC caused an abortion
- 50 per cent confused EC with mifepristone (RU486)

FPQ Medical Director Dr Caroline Harvey said the survey results were concerning – particularly in the week before Schoolies.

"If university students, supposedly the most educated and knowledgeable group of young people, are this confused, what are the levels of knowledge among other young people?" Dr Harvey said.

"Emergency contraception is a simple, extremely safe and effective backup when contraception fails or is not used and women should have equitable and easy access to it.

"Emergency contraception is a great Plan B."

Dr Harvey said confusion was caused by calling emergency contraception the 'morning after pill'.

"Emergency contraception is most effective when taken in the first 24 hours after sex but remains very effective up to five days after sex."

"It's available from pharmacies, family planning clinics, sexual health clinics or your doctor. It costs up to \$40. Family Planning Queensland calls on the Federal Government to include promotion and supply of EC in a much-needed strategy to reduce unplanned pregnancies and abortions."

FPQ seeks to improve access to EC for all women through:

- promoting awareness of EC with advertising and promotion direct to the public
- subsidised supply of EC
- educational programs for health professionals (some of whom are not up to date on the latest research on EC)
- advocating availability of advance purchase of EC
- supporting the Queensland Health endorsement of registered nurses to supply EC
- ongoing research to increase knowledge and effective use of all available contraception

For media enquiries call Vivienne Wynter 07 3250 0222 or 0419 029 728