

The CEU Guidance on emergency contraception clearly states that there are many options for emergency contraception available in the UK today. The CEU Guidance on emergency contraception established itself as the final arbiter in ‘small print’ contraceptive advice in the UK today. I found the recent summary on emergency contraception1 both timely and comprehensive. However, there are three points I would like to take issue with, two of which have considerable bearing on the intention of the CEU: I am uncertain whether the authors intended to continue the IUD as contraception2. I imagine this advice was taken from the recent National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) report on long-acting reversible contraception. Many of us find it hard enough to promote the use of IUDs to young teenagers and nulliparous in these circumstances and do not welcome the suggestion that to use a Nova-T 380 would be suboptimal treatment. The Faculty Guidance on emergency contraception includes a discussion about the contraceptive patch, which surely for completeness should be included in your Table 1.

References

Reply
Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the letter from Dr Elena Valarache on ovarian cysts and the levonorgestrel-releasing intrauterine system (LNG-IUS) (Mirena). Based on the evidence, the Faculty of Family Planning and Reproductive Health Care Guidance (FFPRHC) states that there is no significant increased risk compared to copper-bearing intrauterine device users (Grade A).1 A systematic review did not identify an increased risk of ovarian cysts in LNG-IUS users at 5 years compared to copper-bearing intrauterine device users (RR 1.5; 95% CI 0.51–4.4).2

The guidance from NICE on ‘Long-acting reversible contraception’3 states that ovarian follicular cysts occur in 20% of women using the LNG-IUS; however, these are almost always asymptomatic. In addition, spontaneous resolution of ovarian cysts in women using the LNG-IUS has been reported.4 Only one non-randomized study has found that women discontinue with the LNG-IUS as a result of the development of ovarian cysts.5 The CEU supported the counselling of women on potential risks and benefits of contraceptive methods.

Emergency contraception and the LNG-IUS

The Faculty Guidance document from the CEU on ‘Emergency contraception’ (April 2006 issue) is comprehensive, and does provide sound practical guidance on the subject.1 It is surprising that no mention is made that the levonorgestrel-releasing intrauterine system (LNG-IUS) is not licensed and therefore not suitable for emergency contraception.2 It would have been appropriate to emphasise that there is no research evidence available on the effectiveness of the LNG-IUS for use for emergency contraception.

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References
1 Faculty of Family Planning and Reproductive Health Care Clinical Effectiveness Unit. FFPRHC Guidance (April 2006). The effective and appropriate use of long-acting and unsuitable for emergency contraception. Only the TCu380A (or its ‘look-a-likes’) and the IUS (currently not listed in the British National Formulary) would satisfy these criteria for the IUSs available in the UK today.

Previous advice from the CEU2 had been to use any device with ≥300 mm² of copper and I do not know of any evidence-based medicine that has shown any copper IUD to be effective for emergency contraception. Many of us find it hard enough to promote the use of IUDs to young teenagers and nulliparous in these circumstances and do not welcome the suggestion that to use a Nova-T 380 would be suboptimal treatment. The Faculty Guidance on emergency contraception includes a discussion about the contraceptive patch, which surely for completeness should be included in your Table 1.

My final reservation concerns ‘off-licence use’. In several of your ‘Good Practice Point boxes’ you make the comparison that the IUS is ‘outside the product licence’ In the 2003 Guidance2 use ‘more than once in a cycle’ was listed in this category but in the current advice this is no longer mentioned. Had the product licence been changed in this respect?

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References

Reply
Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the letter from Dr Terry McCarthy regarding the CEU Guidance on emergency contraception. Dr McCarthy has studied the recommendations in detail and given careful consideration as to their implications for his own practice. It is very rewarding to the CEU team to know that clinicians are using the Guidance in this way.

References


CEU Guidance on emergency contraception

Terry McCarthy

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