

Emergency Contraception Access in a Historic Southern City: Mystery Caller Study in Birmingham, Alabama

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PURPOSE: Emergency contraception pills (ECPs) may be taken after unprotected intercourse or contraceptive failure. There are two widely available types in the United States: levonorgestrel (LNG) and ulipristal acetate (UPA) pills. We explored ECP access in Birmingham, Alabama, because Alabama has recently introduced legislation (HB314) that may severely restrict abortion access. It is, therefore, essential to understand if ECP access is adequate in this geographic region in the case that there would be greater reliance on them for pregnancy prevention in emergency situations. **METHODS:** A list of independent, chain, and 24-hour retail pharmacies was generated, and a standardized, mystery-caller telephone script was developed to call 69 pharmacies that met inclusion criteria to understand the accessibility of ECPs. **RESULTS:** Of the surveyed pharmacies, 41 (59%) pharmacies had LNG ECP and 0 (0%) had UPA ECP in stock. Chain pharmacies were more likely than independent pharmacies to have LNG ECP in stock (80% v. 31%). While age requirements to purchase LNG ECPs have been removed nationally, 16% of chain pharmacy and 44% of independent pharmacy employees said that ID verifications would necessary. **CONCLUSION:** There are still barriers to ECP access in Alabama as of 2020, which is concerning given the legislation regarding abortion access. People could find it difficult to access ECPs at retail pharmacies.