


Reply
Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the letter from Dr Elena Valarche on ovarian cysts and the levonorgestrel-releasing intrauterine system (LNG-IUS) (Mirena®). Based on the evidence, Faculty of Family Planning and Reproductive Health Care (FFPRHC) Clinical Effectiveness Unit (April 2004) states that women may be reassured that although ovarian cysts occur in levonorgestrel-releasing intrauterine system (LNG-IUS) users, 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 CEU acknowledges that there is a lack of clear guidance on the management of functional ovarian cysts in 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 reported that women discontinue with the LNG-IUS as a result of the development of ovarian cysts.5 The CEU supports this 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 guidelines on the subject.1 It is surprising that no mention is made that the levonorgestrel-releasing intrauterine system (LNG-IUS) is not suitable and not licensed 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

Reply
Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the letter from Dr Terry McCarthy regarding the CEU Guidance on emergency contraception.1 Dr McCarthy suggests the need for a general review of the emergency contraception guidelines and expressed concern that ‘emergency contraception’ in the current advice was not included in the ‘look-a-likes’ section of the guidance. Furthermore, Dr McCarthy does mention that the Flexi-T 380 (currently not listed in the British National Formulary) would satisfy these criteria from the IUDs available in the UK today.

My final reservation concerns ‘off-license use’. In several of your ‘Good Practice Point boxes’ you make the comment that the product 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.1 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.