and correctly is relatively low. However, many women simply may not have realised that they were at risk of pregnancy and therefore did not recognise the need for POEC. A recent study that examined the impact of giving women a supply of POEC to keep at home showed that although the use of POEC did increase, pregnancy and abortion rates did not change. On closer questioning as to why POEC was not used, three out of four women did not realise that they were at risk of pregnancy.5,6 Some 25% of the women attending the TOP clinic had a previous termination. This figure, which is consistent with the UK trend, suggests that although many women may not realise that they are at risk of pregnancy, education and advice given at the TOP clinic is ineffective in a significant proportion of cases. There are of course other reasons why women may seek a TOP, such as the breakdown of a relationship or lack of pregnancy risk awareness, which are not dependent on contraception failure.

Reassuringly, 97% of respondents said that they would be using a form of contraception in the future compared to 65% who were using any prior to becoming pregnant. In addition, as in the 2003 cohort, nine out of ten women would consider using POEC in the future if the need arose. This result suggests that women have a generally positive attitude towards EC, even though the evidence from the present study suggests that women are not necessarily going on to use EC in an appropriate and effective way.

Conclusions

Both awareness and use of POEC amongst women attending the TOP clinic in Fife are high, and appear to have improved since 2003. Despite this high level of awareness, an increased reported past use of POEC and a generally positive attitude to future use of POEC, very few of the women had taken POEC during this pregnancy. In addition, there appears to be confusion regarding the correct time limit for effectiveness of POEC, especially amongst the 16–20–year-old age group. Rather worryingly, this area of knowledge regarding the time limit for effectiveness of POEC appears to have decreased since 2003, especially among 16–20–year-olds.

These results suggest that public awareness campaigns have been effective in increasing awareness of POEC and its availability. More emphasis is needed on raising pregnancy risk awareness and an understanding of the appropriate and effective use of POEC. Efforts in this area especially need to be targeted at the 16–20–year-old age group, since this group has the poorest level of knowledge and is at high risk for unplanned pregnancy.

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank the women who took part in the study.

References


BOOK REVIEWS


This is a weighty, authoritative book that is the complete textbook of the cervix, ‘in health and disease’. Starting from basic structure and function, through development, it provides the latest understanding of the cervix in fertility, infertility, pregnancy and labour. There is a section on cervical infections and the extensive final sections cover all aspects of cervical neoplasia. Throughout, this text is well supported with fabulous clinical photographs and microscope slides. Each chapter brings in the latest research and is extensively referenced. The list of editors and contributors includes many distinguished experts in this field from around the world.

As a jobbing colposcopist I found this book a joyous reminder of the shear beauty of this amazing little organ – as well as its joyous reminder of the sheer beauty of this amazing little organ – as well as its health or safety implications and the reader can go straight to the information page indicated. If an activity carries more serious risks then the flag goes up, but by anybody else around.

Reviewed by Kate Weaver, MFSRH
Staff Grade in Reproductive Health Care, Edinburgh, UK


This is one of my favourite books to recommend to clients who attend for sex therapy or those seeking advice about improving their sex lives. Those who may have read Suzi Godson’s columns in The Independent on Sunday or in Body and Soul will be aware of her unique style and appreciate how very special this book really is.

The cover, layout and pictures truly bring this book into the 21st century! The topics are covered in a practical, no-nonsense, fun way with quotes from real people who have experienced or not experienced the various aspects being discussed. The ‘flag’ system allows the reader to flag important information about sexual matters it is the perfect reference book. I love the modern, colourful illustrations. They are clear and due to their unique style cross boundaries of colour, creed, race, gender and sexual orientation. There is less emphasis on the touchy, feely, emotional and ‘therapy’ aspects of sex that are commonly associated with books about improving sex lives. I feel this enhances the book’s appeal to both men and women. The bright pink cover demands that it be noticed – not just by the person who picks it up to read but everybody else around.

It is divided into six sections with relevant chapters: The Body (for men and women, also includes understanding the sensitive side of it), Solo Sex (reading between the lines for men and women), Sex (including methods, positions, techniques, definitions), Sexploration (dealing with fantasy and other sexual practices), Sex Lives (dealing with sexuality, contraception, sex toys, ageing and illness) and Sexual Health (including STIs, HIV and AIDS). The chapter on emergency contraception needs updating but in general provides excellent information. Throughout the book there is a neat two-step warning system. Wherever there is a yellow flag in the margin, it implies that there are health or safety implications and the reader can go straight to the information page indicated. If an activity carries more serious risks then the flag is red. The emphasis is on enjoying sex but certainly always being safe too! The directory and reading list at the end are also very helpful, although future editions will probably have group sections for carers of these two listings.

I love many things about this book, not least the frank and sensitive way in which sexual techniques, attitudes and styles are represented. As Professor Robert Winston says in his foreword to this book, it signals a change in attitudes towards sexuality and deserves the widest possible readership. I cannot recommend this book enough as a truly wonderful addition to anyone’s book collection – both to read and to recommend to clients.

Reviewed by Neelima Deshpande, MRCOG
Dip PST
Staff Grade Doctor in Family Planning and Psychosexual Therapist. Heart of Birmingham Teaching Primary Care Trust (HoBtPCT), Birmingham, UK

©FSRH J Fam Plan Reprod Health Care 2008: 34(2)