



Reproductive Health Organizations Send Letter to FDA Urging Removal of Restrictions on Over-the-Counter Emergency Contraception

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Washington, D.C. – Today, the Reproductive Health Technologies Project (RHTP), along with over 50 public health professionals, advocacy organizations and medical experts, sent a letter to Commissioner Margaret Hamburg at the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) urging the removal of all restrictions on over-the-counter (OTC) emergency contraception (EC), such as Plan B®. Plan B® is an FDA-approved, back-up birth control method that can prevent pregnancy in the first few days after unprotected sex or contraceptive failure.

A May 2009 court ruling found that the FDA allowed overt political pressure to dictate its decision to place an age restriction on over-the-counter Plan B®, ignoring the scientific findings regarding EC. In its decision, the court ordered the FDA to re-review a 2001 Citizen's Petition, which, citing scientific and medical studies confirming the safety and efficacy of EC for all women, urged the removal of restrictions on obtaining the drug over-the-counter. Today's letter asks FDA to comply with the court order in an expeditious manner.

"The FDA has been ordered to reopen the original Citizen's Petition, which made the case for full over-the-counter access to EC. The FDA now has a responsibility to respond to that Petition, and we urge the agency to do so without delay," said **Jenn Rogers**, Acting Executive Director of the Reproductive Health Technologies Project. "We will continue to place pressure on the FDA to make sure this safe and effective birth control method is made available to all women who need it," said Rogers.

"The FDA has shown a renewed commitment to public health and scientific integrity," said **Susan F. Wood**, Ph.D., Research Professor at the School of Public Health and Health Services at George Washington University, and board member of the Reproductive Health Technologies Project. "I urge the FDA to uphold that commitment by basing its decision on scientific and medical evidence this time," said Wood.

This letter comes a week before the FDA's Transparency Task Force meeting on June 24, 2009, the purpose of which is to solicit recommendations on ways the agency can make its activities and decisions more transparent and accountable to the public. The Obama Administration has been strongly supportive of restoring the integrity of science in agency decision-making, and today's letter urges the FDA to take a first step towards that end by giving Plan B® full OTC status. For more information, please visit: <http://www.rhtp.org>

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Jenn Rogers, Acting Executive Director, RHTP, and Susan F. Wood, Ph.D., Research Professor, School of Public Health and Health Services, George Washington University are available for interview upon request.