

Concerned Clergy for CHOICE

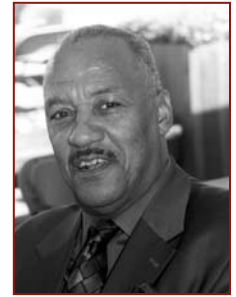


A PROJECT OF THE EDUCATION FUND OF FAMILY PLANNING ADVOCATES

KEEPING IT REAL: AN AFRICAN-AMERICAN PERSPECTIVE ON RELIGION, SEX AND RESPONSIBILITY

Join Our Conference Call, Wednesday, December 6, 2:00 p.m.

The Reverend Carlton Veazey, president and CEO of the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice and minister of the National Baptist Convention USA, will lead an educational conference call, on Wednesday, December 6 from 2:00 to 3:00 p. m. Rev. Veazey is a national spokesperson for reproductive health care and sex education. His topic, "Keeping it Real: An African-American Perspective on Religion, Sex and Responsibility," will focus on the efforts to bring comprehensive sex education to New York State by drawing from his extensive experience in open dialogue in the Black Church. The call will be moderated by The Rev. Dr. Paula J. Gravelle, director of pastoral care at Ellis Hospital in Schenectady, New York, and a member of the Clergy Advisory Board.



There is no charge to participate in the conference call. To register, please call 518-436-8408 or email info@edfundfpa.org.

STEM CELL RESEARCH: A STUDY AND ADVOCACY TOOLKIT FOR CLERGY IS NOW AVAILABLE!

More than 125 religious leaders have already requested copies of *Stem Cell Research: A Study and Advocacy Toolkit for Clergy*, recently released by Concerned Clergy for Choice. This 38 page publication makes clear the strong scientific support for embryonic stem cell research as well as the surrounding ethical, policy, political and religious issues.

Clergy, as pastoral care providers, are all too well acquainted with the human costs of Parkinson's disease, juvenile diabetes, serious burns, spinal cord injury and the many other life-threatening and life-altering medical conditions that stem cell research seeks to cure. This manual is helping religious leaders of many denominations – across New York and across the country – become more informed about stem cell research and become more comfortable discussing the extensive religious support for this promising field of regenerative medicine. For a complimentary copy of *Stem Cell Research: A Study and Advocacy Toolkit for Clergy* please contact Rabbi Dennis Ross at info@edfundfpa.org.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

FOR THESE UPCOMING
EVENTS IN ALBANY

Day of Advocacy:
Tuesday, January 23, 2007

FPA's 30th Anniversary
Annual Conference:
Monday, March 26, 2007

On-camera Media Training
for Clergy:
Tuesday evening, May 1, 2007

Clergy Day:
Wednesday, May 2, 2007

INSIDE: PASTORAL CRISIS CARE: EMERGENCY CONTRACEPTION

FROM THE DIRECTOR

PASTORAL CRISIS CARE: EMERGENCY CONTRACEPTION

Perhaps a pastor hears it during a phone call from a worried teen. Or the conversation begins when a young woman stops by her synagogue, hoping the rabbi is in. Clergy – first responders to life’s upsets – witness the pressing need for unimpaired access to emergency contraception. Our ability to refer a woman for emergency contraception – immediately – is a critical component of pastoral crisis care.



The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) recently ruled that women 18 years of age and older may obtain emergency contraception (EC) from a pharmacist without a doctor’s prescription. EC, sometimes known as the “morning-after pill”, continues to be available in New York State through Planned Parenthood and other family planning clinics. Victims of sexual assault can get EC from hospital emergency rooms. It should be noted that the new pharmacy access is “behind the counter” – a woman must ask the pharmacist for EC and present proof of age, even though EC is as safe a medication as anything else stocked on the open pharmacy – or convenience store – shelves. And anyone age 17 and younger still must present a doctor’s prescription.

It is more than three years since two scientific panels from the FDA endorsed EC as safe, effective and appropriate for over-the-counter purchase and use by women of all ages. Nevertheless, the FDA bowed to political considerations, all that time ignoring its own medical advisors. The expanded access is a welcome step – but it is not enough.

Teen access to EC continues to be a pressing need. Currently, teens 17 and under can obtain EC only through a doctor’s prescription. This medically unnecessary delay can impair EC’s effectiveness, leading to an increased possibility of unintended teen pregnancy. Many of us have strong and continuing relationships with the teens in our houses of worship. We are especially well informed when it comes to speaking about the needs of our youth. That is why many of us react with dismay over the continuing restrictions on teen access to EC. And we also remain concerned that a pharmacist with private religious issues about contraception can still refuse to provide EC.

Increased access to EC is welcome – but we need more. We hope you add your voice to ours in making emergency contraception readily available for women of all ages.

Rabbi Dennis S. Ross, Director
Concerned Clergy for Choice

EMERGENCY CONTRACEPTION: MEDICAL OPINION

“Emergency contraception has tremendous potential to reduce unintended pregnancy rates in teens and adults... An increase in awareness and availability of emergency contraception to teens does not change reported rates of sexual activity or increase the frequency of unprotected intercourse among adolescents.”

“The American Academy of Pediatrics, as well as other professional organizations, supports over-the-counter availability of emergency contraception....”

American Academy of Pediatrics, Policy Statement, Committee on Adolescence, Emergency Contraception, *Pediatrics*, Vol. 116, No. 4, October, 2005

“It’s very unfortunate that patients will need to undergo abortions that could be prevented if emergency contraception were more widely available.”

Dr. Marc Heller, Medical Director,
Planned Parenthood Mohawk Hudson Valley

“There is a public health imperative in this country to increase access to emergency contraception.”

“Statement of The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists on the Failure of the FDA to approve OTC Status for Plan B” by Vivian M. Dickerson, MD, ACOG President

EMERGENCY CONTRACEPTION: WHAT WE NEED TO KNOW....

What is emergency contraception?

Emergency contraception (EC), a high dose of the same hormones found in birth control pills, can prevent pregnancy after unprotected sexual intercourse. One product, Plan B, is sold specifically as emergency contraceptive. Many brands of ordinary birth control pills can also be used for emergency contraception.

How does EC work?

The medication is taken in two doses, 12 hours apart. EC works to prevent pregnancy by delaying ovulation or inhibiting fertilization, and potentially, by interfering with the implantation of a fertilized egg. Because EC's effectiveness decreases over time – practically by the hour – scientists are concluding that EC's primary method of action is the prevention of fertilization or the inhibition of ovulation.

How long after unprotected intercourse can EC be used?

The sooner, the better. EC must be started within 120 hours – five days – of unprotected intercourse. If the first dose is taken within 72 hours, it can reduce the risk of pregnancy by 75 to 89 percent.

Can EC cause an abortion?

No. As the label says, emergency contraception is just “contraception.” Like any other contraception, emergency contraception prevents pregnancy. EC has no effect on an established pregnancy. It cannot cause an abortion or harm a developing fetus. EC is sometimes mistaken for RU-486 which is prescribed for medical abortion.

Why is immediate access to EC so critical?

EC is a time-sensitive medication; the sooner the drug is given, the more effective it is in preventing pregnancy from occurring. Delays caused by the unnecessary, time-consuming need to obtain a prescription increase the chances of a pregnancy. Not all pharmacies carry emergency contraception, and those that do may not be open when a woman needs the medication. Victims of violent sexual crimes deserve full, immediate and comprehensive medical care.

“What We Need to Know” is based on information from the Planned Parenthood Federation of America. To learn more, visit www.ppfa.org.

EMERGENCY CONTRACEPTION: A RELIGIOUS AND SOCIAL GOOD

“Access to emergency contraception is critical to the health and well being of all women.”

Catholics for a Free Choice, NA'AMAT USA, Presbyterian Church (USA), Washington Office, Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice, Union for Reform Judaism, Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations, United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries, United Methodist Church, General Board of Church & Society

“Out of our profound regard for life, we believe that all efforts should be made to ensure that each child is born into a nurturing environment and that parents are prepared to raise the child with love and care. Emergency contraception promises to help make that possible by reducing unintended pregnancy”

“Emergency Contraception: A Sound Moral Choice,” Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice

“While we are glad to know the Food and Drug Administration finally ended its foot-dragging on this issue, Planned Parenthood is troubled by the scientifically baseless restriction imposed on teenagers. The United States has one of the highest rates of teen pregnancy in the western world. – anything that makes it harder for teenagers to avoid unintended pregnancy is bad medicine and bad public policy.”

Cecile Richards, President, Planned Parenthood Federation of America,

“As a parent, I want my children to be safe. I have tried to raise them to feel that they can always talk to me about anything. But if for some reason they can't talk to me, I want them to be able to get the health care they need and deserve. Pregnancy can be one of the greatest joys of life when the time is right. But when pregnancy is not desired, the results can be devastating.”

JoAnn Smith, President and CEO, Family Planning Advocates of New York State

CONCERNED CLERGY FOR CHOICE VOICES

Almost 50% of all pregnancies in the United States are unintended! That fact alone reveals the need for ready availability of emergency contraception (EC). EC is recognized and approved as effective and safe by the medical establishment.

Given that EC is most effective if taken within 24 hours of intercourse, it makes the most sense to have unfettered access to it. This is especially true in the case of young, easily discouraged women (under 20 years of age) – 81% of their pregnancies are unintended. Making easy, unrestricted access to EC would not only lower the number of unintended pregnancies, it would also lower the number of subsequent abortions.

We need to recognize that more than 800,000 teens a year get pregnant in this country; we have one of the highest teen pregnancy rates in the world. EC can prevent a very large number of unintended teen pregnancies. And studies have shown that teen access to EC does not increase or encourage teen sexual activity.

Easy access to EC is consistent with all compassionate religions which value both human freedom and the inherent dignity of all human beings.

The Rev. James Bridges, Unitarian Universalist Congregation, Rock Tavern, NY

One of the many pieces of my work as a rabbi is my strong connection to our teenagers. I am honored that our synagogue teens trust me with their various personal issues. Because our teens know that I used to be a sex education instructor and counselor, they regularly talk to me about their private sex lives, whether they are considering having sex, have already had it, or were victims of rape or incest. Through these sacred conversations, I have a tremendous number of stories about responsible people facing very challenging situations.

Just the other day, a college-age woman came to me, desperate – the condom broke the night before and she did not know what to do. We talked about the benefits of Emergency Contraception, such as “Plan B,” and how it does not terminate, but rather prevents a pregnancy. I explained that repeated studies have found Plan B to be safe and highly effective, especially if taken within 24 hours.

A week before that session, a young woman who is studying with me asked to meet on a different matter. She told me her recent horror: she had been raped by her uncle and wanted to know if Judaism would support her need to prevent a possible pregnancy. I told her that my denomination’s professional organization, Central Conference of American Rabbis, endorsed access to contraception as early as 1929. Through decades since then, the Reform movement across America has supported the right for women to be responsible for individual choices pertaining to their bodies, including the use of birth control, emergency contraception, and abortion. EC was the ideal solution for her. Her story was tragic enough; she did not want to even have to think about the possibility of being pregnant from her uncle. Her choice is certainly held by many people in the Jewish community, but beyond the religious support, every hospital should provide medically accurate information about EC, and provide it promptly, when requested.

Pure and simply, EC reduces the likelihood of a woman getting pregnant. EC saves tremendous emotional anguish. My hope is that Congress will support legislation to provide honest education to the public about their various choices and provide EC to women, as needed.

*Rabbi Alison B. Kobey
Associate Rabbi and Director of Life Long Jewish Learning, Temple B’rith Kodesh,
Rochester, NY*

CLERGY ADVISORY BOARD

The Clergy Advisory Board, a group of pro-choice clergy spanning an array of faiths and regions of New York State, advise the Concerned Clergy for Choice project.

Members include:

The Rev. Kaaren Anderson
Unitarian Universalist,
Rochester

The Rev. James R. Bridges
Unitarian Universalist
Congregation at
Rock Tavern

The Rev. Tom Davis
United Church of Christ
Saratoga Springs

The Rev. Dr. Paula Gravelle
Lutheran, Schenectady

Rabbi Marc Gruber
Central Synagogue,
Rockville Centre

The Rev. Tomi Jacobs
Christ and Emmanuel
Lutheran Churches in
Ghent and Chatham

Rabbi Alison Kobey
B’rith Kodesh,
Rochester, NY

The Rev. Sara
Lamar-Sterling
Park Avenue United
Methodist Church,
New York

The Rev. Joel Miller
Unitarian Universalist
Church, Buffalo

The Rev. Melanie Miller
United Church of Christ,
Chappaqua

The Rev. Samuel Trumbore
First Unitarian Universalist
Society Albany