

Emergency Contraception Access in Metropolitan and Non-Metropolitan Pharmacies: An In-Store Analysis of Stocking Practices in Georgia

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BACKGROUND

- During 2010, unintended pregnancies made up 60% of all pregnancies in Georgia.[1]
- Emergency contraception is most effective when taken within 5 days of intercourse. [2].
- Levonorgestrel (LNG) emergency contraception (EC) is currently available without a prescription, while ulipristal acetate (UPA) EC is prescription only.[3]
- Prior telephone mystery shopper data indicates that consumers face barriers to accessing EC, such as lack of stock and age restrictions, but did not assess OTC availability. [4]

OUTCOMES

Primary Outcome

- Assess the availability of oral emergency contraception in Georgia community pharmacies, and compare differences between metropolitan and non-metropolitan counties.

STUDY DESIGN

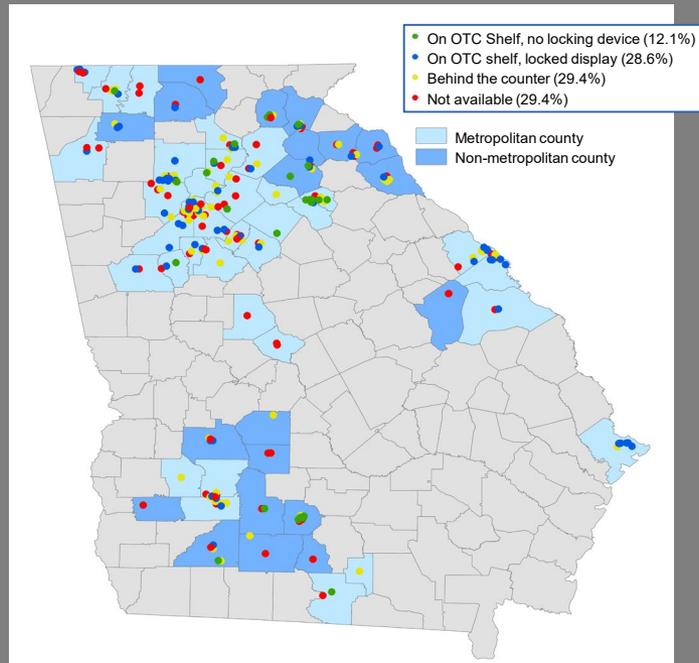
- Design: prospective, cross sectional
- Methods: Researchers conducted in-person surveys in pharmacies located within non-metropolitan or metropolitan areas.
- Data collection: Researchers used a standardized questionnaire on LNG EC availability within stores. Researchers were encouraged to ask additional questions to assess barriers if pharmacy staff were willing to participate.
- Time frame: July to August 2022
- Descriptive statistics, t-test, and chi square tests were completed using SPSS v 28.

RESULTS

Study Sample

- 260 pharmacies visited, 248 included in data analysis
 - 12 pharmacies excluded: 8 out of business, 4 missing data
- Metro 70.2% (n=174) vs. Non-metro 29.8% (n=74)
- Chain 61.7% (n=153) vs. Independent 38.3% (n=95)

Oral levonorgestrel emergency contraception became OTC in 2013; however, most Georgia pharmacies do not stock it on the OTC shelf.



RESULTS

Product Availability

- Of 248 stores, 70.6% (n=175) stocked LNG EC somewhere in the store.
 - Metro 73.6% vs. Non-metro 63.5%, p=0.151
- Of 248 stores, 40.7% (n=101) had LNG EC stocked on the OTC shelf.
 - Metro 42.0% vs. Non-metro 37.8%, p=0.647
- Of 194 stores that discussed UPA EC, 7.2% (n=14) had it in-stock.
 - Metro 8.1% vs. Non-metro 5.1%, p=0.647

Barriers to Access

- Of 101 stores with LNG EC on the OTC shelf, 70.3% (n=71) stored it in some type of locked barrier.
 - Metro 78.1% vs. Non-metro 50%, p=0.012
- Of 248 stores, only 12.1% (n=30) stored LNG EC unrestricted on the OTC shelf.
 - Metro 9.2% vs. Non-metro 18.9%, p= 0.141
- Of 155 stores that discussed age restrictions, 28.4% (n=44) imposed an outdated policy on the purchase of EC.
 - Metro 23.3% vs. Non-metro 38.5%, p=0.074

Cost	Average	Min	Max
Brand LNG EC	\$48.92	\$29.99	\$63.99
Generic LNG EC	\$34.96	\$5.18	\$54.00

CONCLUSIONS

- Despite becoming available OTC a decade ago, women in Georgia still face barriers to timely access at local pharmacies.
- Women in metropolitan areas have a higher probability of encountering pharmacies that do not stock LNG EC or use a locked barrier system.
- In non-metropolitan areas, there was an increased chance of pharmacies endorsing an inappropriate age restriction on the purchase of EC.
- Georgia pharmacies, across all geographic locations, must develop strategies to reduce unnecessary barriers to the prompt access of EC.

REFERENCES

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