



RHTP Celebrates Victory in Plan B[®] OTC Approval *The Fight Continues for Young Women Left Behind*

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Washington D.C. – Today the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved over-the-counter (OTC) access to Plan B[®] emergency contraception for women 18 years and older. This is a hard-fought and well-deserved victory for women and women’s health advocates who have worked tirelessly for OTC approval of this safe and effective method of preventing pregnancy.

“Finally, the FDA has stood behind the overwhelming scientific and medical evidence that shows Plan B is a safe, effective back-up birth control method and that keeping it on prescription unnecessarily delays timely use of this product,” said Kirsten Moore, President and CEO of the Reproductive Health Technologies Project (RHTP).

While this is a triumph for most women, young women 17 years and under are left behind. Restricting OTC access will come at a real cost to these women who will have to jump through hoops for this treatment, thereby delaying access and making it less effective. Studies show that increased access to emergency contraception does not cause teen promiscuity or other health risk behaviors. With the almost 300,000 pregnancies occurring each year in this country among women under 18, OTC access to Plan B for teens is a common sense next-step in a larger strategy to reduce unintended teen pregnancy.

In December 2003, two FDA expert advisory committees voted overwhelmingly to recommend that Plan B be made available OTC for women of all ages – a recommendation supported by many scientists and health experts within the Agency. Since then, the FDA has missed deadlines, broken promises to Senators, instituted an unwarranted rule-making process, and flip-flopped on baseless age requirements stalling the process.

“To be honest, given the bad faith shown by the political leadership at the FDA, we didn’t expect to get this far. We are pleased that a common sense, common ground agenda for reducing unintended pregnancy and the need for abortion finally won out. Now the real work begins to ensure that as many women as possible are able to get this treatment as quickly as possible. As more OTC experience with this product accumulates, we hope that Barr Pharmaceuticals, Inc. and the FDA will move quickly to lift these unnecessary restrictions on distribution,” Moore said.

Plan B is an FDA-approved, back-up birth control method that prevents pregnancy in the first few days after sex. Containing a concentrated dose of the progestin hormone found in daily birth control pills, Plan B reduces the risk of pregnancy by up to 89 percent when taken within 72 hours of sexual intercourse (the sooner a woman takes it, the more effective it is). Experts estimate that wider use of emergency contraception could prevent up to half of the 3 million unintended pregnancies that occur each year in the U.S.

For a complete timeline of the Plan B OTC process please visit: www.rhtp.org.

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