

**FACT
SHEET**

**EMERGENCY CONTRACEPTION/ PREGNANCY
AND SEXUAL ASSAULT**

Approximately 700,000 women of reproductive age are victims of sexual assault in the United States per year. Between 1% and 5% of sexual assaults result in pregnancy, for a total of 32,000 pregnancies per year. Of these, 14,000 are aborted because of incest or rape. Of 125 hospitals surveyed, less than half (42%) routinely offer emergency contraception counseling, and 16% of the hospitals did not offer any counseling regarding emergency contraception.

Patel, A., Simons, R., Piotrowski, Z.H., Shulman, L. Petraitis, C. "Under-use of Emergency Contraception for Victims of Sexual Assault," International Journal of Fertility: Women's Medicine, 49(6), 2004.

A longitudinal study to assess the prevalence and incidence of rape and related physical and mental outcomes estimated that the national rate of rape-related pregnancy is 5% among victims of childbearing age (12-45 years). Among the cases of rape-related pregnancy, the majority had occurred among adolescents and resulted from assaults by a known, often related, perpetrator. Only 12% of the sexual assault victims in this study received immediate medical attention. 47% received no medical attention relating to the rape. 32% of the victims did not discover they were pregnant until they had already entered their 2nd trimester. 32% of the women opted to keep the infant, 50% underwent an abortion, 6% placed the infant up for adoption and 12% had a spontaneous abortion.

Holmes, M., Resnick, H., Kilpatrick, D & Best, C. (1996) "Rape-Related Pregnancy: Estimates from a National Sample of Women," American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology, 175(2), Noll, J., Horowitz, I., et al., 2003.

A survey conducted with emergency department personnel in 58 large urban hospitals across the country indicated that:

- Nearly half (12) of the Catholic hospitals reported policy that prohibited staff from discussing emergency contraceptives with rape victims.
- 7 of the 12 Catholic hospitals prohibited their physicians from prescribing contraceptives.
- None of the non-Catholic hospitals had restrictive policies.

Smuger, S.S., Spina, B.J., Merz, J.F. "Informed Consent for Emergency Contraceptives: Variability in Hospital Care of Rape Victims," American Journal of Public Health, 90(9), 2002.

In Pennsylvania, a survey of 152 hospitals indicated that 46% of the hospitals routinely offer and provide sexual assault victims with emergency contraception. 44% of the hospitals surveyed did provide information about emergency contraception and pills but only at the discretion of the physician on duty in the emergency room. 10% of the hospital emergency rooms surveyed did not provide any emergency contraception services to sexual assault victims.

Clara Bell Duvall Reproductive Freedom Project. Study Update: Emergency Contraception Services for Rape Victims in Pennsylvania Hospitals. www.aclupa.org/duvall/ecup-date.html, 2002.

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