



Position Statement

The Use of Emergency Contraception Post Sexual Assault

Statement of Problem: Sexual Assault is a global public health issue. It is estimated that 1 out of 3 women worldwide has experienced rape or sexual assault.ⁱ Sexual assault can be experienced in intimate relationships, forced or coerced sexual initiation of young girls and adolescents, human trafficking and armed conflict and refugee settings.ⁱⁱ One of the physical results of sexual violence is unintended pregnancies. Emergency contraception (EC) is a safe and efficacious method for avoiding unintended pregnancy.

While EC could reduce the risk of unintended pregnancies by 60-90%, many women experience significant barriers to accessing this important public health intervention. The purpose of this statement is to promote immediate access to emergency contraceptive information and EC medications for every victim of sexual assault worldwide.

Association Position: The IAFN recognizes the recommendation by the World Health Organization that the use of EC after sexual assault is a safe form of contraception. The Association further recommends that EC should be immediately offered and available to all female victims of sexual assault of reproductive age who choose to use EC as a means of protection from unintended pregnancy. Health care providers who treat victims of sexual assault should create protocols and procedures that guarantee access to EC for victims of sexual assault, while ensuring that the beliefs of medical providers who consciously object to EC are respected.

Rationale: EC pills consist of the same hormones found in oral contraceptives, at a higher dose and have been available in the United States and other countries such as Canada in a dedicated EC product for 6 years. Treatment consists of a onetime dose of 1.5mg of levonorgestrel.

As members of IAFN we strive to “collaborate with nurses, health care providers, and other professionals throughout the world to promote ethically informed and culturally competent practices.”ⁱⁱⁱ While we respect the beliefs of our colleagues we acknowledge our first obligation is to provide care to our patients. Therefore we support the creation of protocols and procedures that will allow victims of sexual assault worldwide immediate access to emergency contraception.

ⁱ Worldwide Sexual Assault Statistics 2005: George Mason University found at:
<http://www2.gmu.edu/dpt/unilife/sexual//brochures/WorldStats2005.pdf>

ⁱⁱ World Health Organization (WHO). **World Report on Violence and Health.** (2002) Chapter 6 Sexual Violence
found at : http://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/violence/global_campaign/en/chap6.pdf

ⁱⁱⁱ IAFN Vision of Ethical Practice (2008) found at:
<http://www.iafn.org/displaycommon.cfm?an=1&subarticlenbr=56>