

Media release

Tuesday 1 October 2019

'Morning after' misleading Schoolies on emergency contraception

Approximately half of Schoolies are unaware emergency contraception is available and more than one-quarter believe it is harmful according to [a new Australian research study](#) urging a re-think on outdated and misleading 'morning after' terminology.

Released this morning in the Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Australia (SHPA)'s flagship journal, the study by researchers from Queensland's Griffith University analysed 500 responses by Schoolies at Surfers Paradise in 2017, finding 63% were unaware emergency contraception was available without prescription, and that young women were two to three times more likely than young men to show understanding of its availability, use, safety and effectiveness.

Lead researcher Denise Hope, School of Pharmacy & Pharmacology at Griffith University, says while rates of understanding of emergency contraception in Schoolies parallel the general population, they form a more vulnerable cohort.

'Numerous studies tell us engagement in intoxication and unprotected sex is very high at Schoolies, both in Queensland and in Victoria and Western Australia, and the impact of unplanned pregnancy is significantly greater in younger people.

'Schoolies may not access emergency contraception when indicated due to fear of harm, uncertainty about its effectiveness window or where to access it.

'We may not be able to change behaviours, but we can increase options and peace of mind for young people.'

With less than two months before the first Schoolies are due to descend on the famed holiday strip, Hope says the timing is right to have clearer discussions about the language of emergency contraception.

'Half of respondents thought the window of effectiveness was either 12 or 24 hours, which tells us the "morning after" misnomer is clearly misleading.

'While the effectiveness of emergency contraception is enhanced by its timely use, young women should be made aware they have up to five days following unprotected intercourse to access the medicine from a pharmacy.

'This phrasing should be abandoned, in favour of "emergency contraception", which is more clinically appropriate and descriptive.

'Pharmacists are an accessible source of free advice, provision of support relating to sexual health and referral as necessary.'

The article '[Emergency contraception awareness in an at-risk population](#)' is now available via SHPA's *Journal of Pharmacy Practice and Research (JPPR)*.

- ends -

About Griffith University

Griffith University was created to be a different kind of university—challenging conventions, creating bold new trends and pioneering solutions through innovative teaching and research. Its high-quality degrees are specifically designed to prepare students for the future and are developed in consultation with industry, based on cutting-edge research, and taught by Australia’s most awarded teachers. Since its beginning, Griffith has been deeply connected to the Asian region, environmentally aware, open to the community and industry focused. Ranking in the top 2% of universities worldwide, Griffith hosts 50,000 students across six campuses in South East Queensland including its Digital campus.

About SHPA

The Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Australia (SHPA) is the national, professional, for-purpose organisation for leading pharmacists and pharmacy technicians working across Australia’s health system, advocating for their pivotal role improving the safety and quality of medicines use. Embedded in multidisciplinary medical teams and equipped with exceptional medicines management expertise, SHPA members are progressive advocates for clinical excellence, committed to evidence-based practice and passionate about patient care.

shpa.org.au |   