

Primary Care Professionals' Views on Increasing Access to Emergency Contraception.

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Objective: To investigate primary care professionals' views of increasing access to emergency contraception (EC) as a potentially important cultural context to reducing unwanted pregnancy. **Design and Methods:** Semi-structured interviews with practice staff at 13 purposively General Practices and a Family Planning Clinic in Edinburgh. The qualitative interviews and analysis formed part of a wider realistic evaluation of an EC intervention.

Results: Health professionals interchangeably used medical and moral justifications for not increasing access to EC to young women. Women who needed to use EC were seen as younger, irresponsible and without steady relationships. Professionals in more affluent practice areas constructed their local population as responsible, organised and in stable family situations and therefore less likely to need EC. Professionals perceived EC to be a last resort, rather than routine contraception and of being used by women who did not plan their contraception or sexual behaviour well enough. Increasing access to EC was therefore seen to put women in moral jeopardy and contradicted the perceived role of primary care in promoting planned, responsible contraceptive use.

Conclusions: Primary care professionals' views formed an important contextual barrier to attempts to increase access to EC.
