

Effect on bleeding patterns following the use of a low dose desogestrel-containing oral contraceptive

P Lavín, C Bravo

Dpto. Obstetricia y Ginecología Sur, Universidad de Chile Hospital Barros Luco-Trudeau, Santiago, Chile

Objective: Irregular bleeding patterns during OC use can lead to treatment discontinuation. This can be particularly problematic in developing countries, where increased bleeding can lead to anemia due to the unstable iron balance in many women. The aim of this study was to assess bleeding patterns with a low dose OC containing 20 µg ethinylestradiol (EE) and 150 µg desogestrel (DSG) in Chilean women.

Design & Methods: An open-label, multi-center clinical trial was performed. A total of 615 healthy women requesting oral contraception were included for a follow-up of 13 cycles. All women received an OC containing 20 µg EE and 150 µg DSG (Mercilon®). Assessments were performed at baseline and after cycles 13.

Results Seventy-eight percent of the women had switched from another OC and 12.4% had not previously used an OC. The women had a mean age of 27.0 ± 5.8 years (range 18–40) and a mean weight of 59.1 ± 8.8 kg (range 37–79) at baseline. Mean weight decreased by 1.4 kg to 57.7 ± 13.7 kg at the end of the treatment period. The number of women experiencing “normal” menstrual blood flow increased slightly (68.6% of all women at baseline, 71.2% at cycle 13), whereas there was a bigger increase in the number of women experiencing less than normal blood flow (11.2% at baseline, 24.2% at cycle 13) as perceived by the women themselves. Irregular bleeding (breakthrough bleeding or spotting) decreased from 7.0% of the women at baseline to 3.7% at treatment cycle 13. At baseline, 54.3% of the women reported to suffer from dysmenorrhea; this decreased to 20.1% of the women at cycle 13. Seventy-three women (12%) withdrew from the study, the main reasons being for general complaints (36%), having run out of pills (19%), and medical reasons (15%).

Conclusions: Mercilon® maintains good cycle control with normal or less than normal menstrual flow as perceived by the woman herself. In addition, it significantly improves dysmenorrhea and has a neutral effect on bodyweight.