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Emergency Contraception: High School Nurses and Health Educators'
Perceptions of Adolescent Knowledge and Access of EC

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In 2006, 8 out of every 100 adolescent females in Vermont became pregnant. Adolescent pregnancy is associated with lower high school matriculation rates, increased difficulty in obtaining full-time employment, and higher rates of child abuse and infant mortality. Negative psychological effects may occur over the choice of abortion and adoption. Emergency contraception, hormone therapy to prevent fertilization and implantation of ova was ruled in 2006 by the FDA to be a safe method of pregnancy prevention. Vermont legislatures passed a law in 2006 allowing adolescents to obtain emergency contraception without a physician's prescription from specially trained pharmacists. The pharmacist must have a state Department of Health and state Board of Pharmacy recognized collaborative practice agreement with a physician for this to occur. Little research exists on the role of this legislation, and on the role of EC in preventing adolescent pregnancies. A qualitative descriptive study was conducted to obtain high school health educators and nurses' perceptions of adolescent knowledge and access of emergency contraception. An open question interview format was used and the interviews were audiotaped and transcribed verbatim. Four common themes emerged: Sharing Information, Perceived Adolescent Knowledge, Perceived Barriers for Adolescents and Increasing Consumer Awareness. The researcher and participants suggest a need for further research on adolescent perceptions of access and knowledge of emergency contraception, as well as how pharmacists perceive their role in aiding adolescents in accessing emergency contraception.