

Pediatric emergency health care providers' knowledge, attitudes, and experiences regarding emergency contraception

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OBJECTIVES: The objective was to describe knowledge, attitudes, and experiences regarding emergency contraception (EC) among pediatric emergency health care providers (HCPs).

METHODS: This multicenter, focus group study elicited thoughts and experiences from pediatric emergency HCPs about EC. Participants were physicians, nurse practitioners (NPs), and nurses in one of three urban, geographically distinct, pediatric emergency departments (EDs). A professional moderator used a semistructured format for sessions, which were audiotaped, transcribed, and analyzed for recurrent themes. Participants provided demographic information and completed a written survey evaluating EC knowledge.

RESULTS: Eighty-five HCPs (41 physicians, eight NPs, and 36 nurses) participated in 12 focus groups. Overall knowledge about EC was poor. Participants identified barriers including cost, privacy, knowledge, and provider refusal. Provision of EC for adolescents was supported by the majority of physicians and NPs; however, many nurses were not supportive, especially following consensual intercourse. The authors identified use of social judgment by nurses as a novel barrier to EC provision. The majority of HCPs did not support screening for potential EC need. The majority of physicians and NPs felt obligated to provide adolescents with all contraceptive options, while more nurses supported provider refusal to provide EC.

CONCLUSIONS: This study identified important HCP perceptions and barriers about EC provision in the pediatric ED. These findings may inform future efforts to improve EC provision for adolescents. Specifically, future studies to evaluate the differences in attitudes between nurses, physicians, and NPs, and the use of social judgment in EC provision, are warranted.

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