Better access to the "morning after pill"

The Society of Obstetricians and Gynecologists of Canada (SOGC) backs the Canadian government's recent announcement to support access to levonorgestrel (the "morning after pill") without a prescription from a physician.

In British Columbia, Quebec, and Saskatchewan, pharmacists already offer the morning after pill over the counter after an assessment and counselling on its proper use. In the rest of Canada, women must first see a doctor to obtain a prescription for the drug.

How does it apply to your practice? "Greater access to emergency contraception (EC) makes it more likely women will use it early, when it works best," said Dr. David Young, SOGC president. Although EC does not work once a woman is pregnant, it can be effective up to 72 hours after sexual intercourse. Statistics Canada figures from 2001 estimate that EC could possibly prevent as many as 106,418 abortions in Canada every year by either stopping the implantation of the fertilized egg, or interfering with ovulation.

Unprecedented Support for Easier Access to Emergency Contraception Among the Medical Community and the Public: SOGC. Press Release. Ottawa, Ontario, May 19, 2004.

Pfizer.ca: User-friendly for the disabled

Pfizer Canada Inc. has launched its redesigned Web site, which aims to make general health information easily accesible for Canadians with disabilities. The Web site follows the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) guidelines for optimizing online accessibility for the disabled.

How does it apply to your practice? "By making *pfizer.ca* accessible to all Canadians—including those who may have reduced vision or physical limitations—Pfizer is contributing to the healthy ageing of Canadians," said Don Sancton, Pfizer's director of corporate affairs.

Through a "customize this site" option, users can opt for a text-only version (identical to the content on the graphic site), or modify size, contrast, and font type. The new Web site is designed to allow for speech synthesizer software, which reads on-screen text aloud for users with limited, or no vision. In addition, the site requires fewer clicks of the mouse to access the different sections in order to create ease of use for those with physical limitations.

The Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB) worked with Pfizer to test the site's usability.

New Pfizer Canada Web Site Focuses on Healthy Ageing. Press Release. Toronto, Ontario, May 10, 2004.

Atomoxetine: A new weapon in the ADHD battle

A new study presented at this year's annual meeting of the American Psychiatric Association shows that treating children with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) with atomoxetine (proposed brand name Strattera™) helped them fall asleep at bedtime almost 10 times as fast as when treated with methylphenidate (currently the most frequently prescribed psychostimulant ADHD medication).

The results also showed the children were less irritable and had less trouble getting up in the morning than those taking methylphenidate. Atomoxetine is already approved for ADHD treatment in Argentina, Mexico, and Australia, and is the only non-stimulant approved for the treatment of ADHD in the U.S.

How does it apply to your practice? ADHD affects impulsivity, distractibility, activity, concentration, and levels of attention; it is present in 3% to 7% of school-age children. More than two-thirds of those children will carry their symptoms into adulthood. Atomoxetine is currently under review by Health Canada. Dr. Michel Maziade, scientific director and professor of psychiatry at l'Université Laval, said the results show that this drug "can help improve the quality of life for children with ADHD, as well as their families."

Atomoxetine (Strattera™) Enabled Children With ADHD to Fall Asleep Faster and Wake Less Irritable Than Those Taking Stimulant Treatment. Press Release. Montreal, Quebec, May 5, 2004.

AndroGel® offers a safe answer to low testosterone

A 42-month American study directed by the Research and Education Institute (REI) at Harbour-UCLA Medical Centre shows long-term use of the testosterone gel AndroGel®, 1%, is effective and safe for men with hypogonadism. The men involved in the study showed both rapid and sustained improvements in their mood and sexual function during continuous AndroGel treatment.

How does it apply to your practice? Research says that after the age of 30, men lose approximately 10% of their testosterone every decade. "The results show three plus years of continued benefits and provide new information on the degree of safety for men treated with testosterone," said Dr. Ronald Swerdloff, REI investigator. "Nevertheless, doctors must monitor their patients throughout therapy."

That is good news for the 4 to 5 million American men with low testosterone and their male counterparts worldwide.

Testosterone Gel (AndroGel®) Study First to Show Long-Term Benefits and Safety. Press Release. Torrance, California, May 4, 2004.