

Emergency contraception (EC) has fallen short of its potential to decrease unplanned pregnancy and abortion rates. An underutilized option for EC that is extremely effective for both EC and long-term contraception is the copper IUD. The objective of this research project is to use qualitative and quantitative research methods to investigate women's ambivalence about committing to long-term contraception when they present for EC and to assess how the selection of the copper IUD versus oral levonorgestrel (LNG) for EC affects future use of an effective method of contraception.

Using in depth interviews, many EC users think about contraception in the context of each separate relationship and not as a long-term individual plan, limiting their interest in long term contraception. In addition, few women are aware of the copper IUD's function as EC, and although being pregnant would not fit with these women's current views of themselves, many participants engage in unprotected sex.

This prospective observational study offered women presenting for EC either the copper IUD or LNG for EC. The primary outcome was use of an effective method of contraception (defined as >91% contraceptive effectiveness with actual use) 6 months after presenting for EC. Overall, 176 women received the IUD and 373 women received oral LNG. Preliminary results show that 6 months after presenting for EC women in the IUD group were less likely to have had an unplanned pregnancy and more likely to be using an effective method of contraception. In the IUD group less than 5% of women have had an expulsion and less than 10% of the women have had the IUD removed.

This portion of the study is ongoing and will follow participants for 1 year.