VENDING MACHINE ACCESS TO EMERGENCY CONTRACEPTION ON A COLLEGE CAMPUS

Betty Boyle Duke, DNP, PNP-PC
Sarah Ann Anderson Burnett, MD, PhD, FAAP
Cindy Tran, RN
Primary Care Health Services, Barnard College

ABSTRACT

Recent legislation has prompted Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) advocates and the public to advocate for expanded access to emergency contraception in the US. Some states have shifted their focus to specific landscapes requiring expanded services and SRH access, including the campuses of state-funded colleges and universities (NY Legislation, 2023). A vending machine can enhance OTC medication access, especially emergency contraception like the Progestin-only emergency contraceptive pill (ECP), ECP, like Plan B One-Step® or the generic form, the AfterPill®, works to prevent pregnancy by delaying ovulation and is not an abortive medication. This poster promotes the installation of a medication vending machine for students at a private college, conveniently placed in a dormitory lobby to ensure privacy and 24/7 accessibility. The vending machine caters to after-hours needs, including weekends, with staff monitoring peak sales periods for stock management. Notably, emergency contraception is the top-selling item among students and has shown marked increase in sales over the last two and half years, with 2 x increase in sales from summer 2022 to 2023. Additionally, during the Fall and Spring, there has been a 1.5 times increase in sales from 2022 to 2023, with initial 2024 data indicating similar projections.

DISCUSSION

Tracking sales of stocked items informs college health staff of items that need to be replenished more frequently. Monitoring the frequency of EC purchases illustrates student purchases when most in demand, even during hours when college health is open, confirming EC as a high-demand item on this college campus. Those in need of emergency contraception who often face barriers such as cost ($25-40), concerns about privacy, gatekeeping/obstruction at pharmacies, and transportation to access were readily able to access ECPs at their convenience.

OBJECTIVE

- Describe the utilization of a 24-7 on campus vending machine for OTC medication access to items like emergency contraception (EC).
- Discuss utilization of emergency contraceptive pills offered through a campus medication vending machine.
- Assess critical considerations for operationalizing an on campus medication vending machine with SRH products.

METHODOLOGY

Nayax, an inventory management program, was used to track the sales of EC purchased from on-campus vending machines for ECP purchases.

- Reviewed sales data from the college’s vending machine from 07/1/2022 to 04/30/2024.
- Specific vending slots were assigned numbers corresponding to EC when supplies were first loaded into the machine.
- Inventory was tracked by frequency of purchases, card sales tallied, and time of day products were dispensed for the specified time period.

CONCLUSION

- EC access is critical to adolescent and young adult health and autonomy.
- A campus-based vending machine with 24/7 access is a critical tool, especially with below-market prices.
- Among students who use the college’s vending machine, restocking data indicate ECPs as the most purchased than any other product category examined.
- As one of the 50 colleges and universities that offer vending machine services, this institution continues to offer ECP at cost since the machine is stocked by staff as compared to outsourced commercially managed machines.

EMERGENCY CONTRACEPTIVE PILL SALES

In 2019, the college installed a vending machine to provide 24-hour access to over-the-counter medication, including EC, for student use at a cost of $8 per pack as compared to the $35 cost at local retail pharmacies.

Administrative data concludes the vending machine was cost-effective, as within two years of installation, sales from items purchased from the machine covered the entire purchase cost of $4500.

Initially, utilization was low, but during the pandemic, the emergency contraceptive pill (ECP) not only remained the most commonly purchased item but also experienced a marked increase in the purchase of ECPs during the school year. April continues to reflect the most sales, while July and August have the least reported sales, likely due to fewer students enrolled and on campus during summer compared to the Fall and Spring semesters.

EC sales doubled from Summer 2022 to 2023 and T by 1.5 times during the 2022 Fall and Spring semesters as compared to same time in 2023. EC sales during Spring 2024 semester are on track with continued increases when compared to past Spring semesters.