Faculty of Sexual & Reproductive Healthcare

Position Statement on HIV & Progestogen-only Contraceptives

6th March 2014

An article[1] published in the British Medical Journal (BMJ) in November 2013, questioned whether women with HIV, or at high risk of contracting HIV, should use progestogen-containing contraceptives.

The paper highlights data suggesting that the progestogen-only injectable may increase a woman’s risk of acquiring or transmitting HIV. The authors do however highlight that the degree to which risk is increased is uncertain and the level of evidence is not particularly high. The article, does not suggest that medroxyprogesterone acetate should be denied to women who wish to use it, but rather calls for healthcare providers to be more aware of the possible risks and to discuss them with women and to consider offering alternatives such as copper intrauterine devices or the levonorgestrel intrauterine system. The authors of the article express their view that firm recommendations to guide contraceptive choices for HIV positive patients are lacking.

A causal relationship between the injectable and increased acquisition/transmission of HIV cannot be entirely excluded but there is insufficient evidence to change current medical eligibility criteria for women at high risk of HIV or living with HIV[2]. None of the ten observational studies noted a statistically significant association between use of the progestogen-only injectable and HIV disease progression.

The Faculty of Sexual and Reproductive Healthcare (FSRH) is working with the British Association for Sexual Health and HIV (BASHH) and British HIV Association (BHIVA) to update guidelines covering contraceptive choices for women with HIV. In the meantime, the FSRH would advise that women requesting contraception should be informed about all available methods and supported to make the best choice for them as individuals. All women at risk of acquiring or transmitting STIs should be advised about safer sex and that the consistent and correct use of condoms provides an effective means of protecting against HIV and other STIs[2].

References