

FSRH and RCOG joint statement on Bayer's decision to discontinue Essure®

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The Faculty of Sexual Reproductive Healthcare (FSRH), as the largest professional membership body in the UK working to improve standards in sexual and reproductive healthcare, and the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RCOG), as the professional body working towards improving women's health and clinical practice of obstetrics and gynaecology in the UK, would like to express their disappointment at the recent announcement that a reliable form of contraception, Essure® is to be discontinued.

Essure® is a form of permanent female sterilisation which involves the hysteroscopic insertion of flexible micro-inserts into the proximal section of the fallopian tubes and is undertaken without general anaesthesia. Bayer states that demand for Essure® in UK markets has declined, and the decision was taken on commercial grounds. Bayer also stresses that this is not a product recall, therefore, all products already in the marketplace can continue to be used by healthcare professionals accordingly.

The FSRH and RCOG would also like to reassure women that this is a commercial rather than a clinical decision and it does not represent any risks for women already using Essure®. However, withdrawal of any type of contraception from the market means a decrease in choice of contraceptive methods for women. It is of note that hysteroscopic sterilisation with Essure® increases contraceptive choice and offers an alternative to surgical sterilisation, particularly for women with contraindications to surgery. However, other highly-effective options are available for women, such as long-acting reversible contraceptives (LARCs).

Dr Asha Kasliwal, FSRH president, said:

"It is very important that women are informed about the benefits of all contraceptive options, including highly-effective long-acting reversible contraceptives (LARC). LARCs present a number of features which make them a more effective form of contraception for women.

In particular, LARCs do not rely on consistent and correct use by individuals and it is notable that the percentage of women experiencing unintended pregnancies in the first year of LARCs use is much smaller in comparison to most other forms of contraception.

The copper IUD, progestogen-only intrauterine system (IUS), progestogen-only injectable contraceptives and progestogen-only subdermal implants represent great options available for women considering other methods of contraception."

Mr Edward Morris, Vice President of the RCOG, said:

"We are disappointed to learn that the Essure® implant will be discontinued as it is an effective and non-invasive contraceptive option, for which there is no non-surgical alternative. Women who have the implant should be reassured that it is still safe to use, but if they do have any concerns or worries about the device, they should speak to their GP for advice.

“Although there is no comparable non-surgical method of sterilisation, alternative contraceptive options available include laparoscopic sterilisation under general anaesthetic, , the combined and progesterone-only pills, the contraceptive implant, injection and patch, and the intrauterine device and intrauterine system.”

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Faculty of Sexual and Reproductive Healthcare, 27 Sussex Place, London NW1 4RG. Charity No. 1019969.

Notes to editors:

- The Faculty of Sexual and Reproductive Healthcare (FSRH) is the largest UK professional membership organisation working at the heart of sexual and reproductive health (SRH), supporting healthcare professionals to deliver high quality care. It works with its 15,000 members, to shape sexual reproductive health for all. It produces evidence-based clinical guidance, standards, training, qualifications and research into SRH. It also delivers conferences and publishes The Journal of Family Planning and Reproductive Health Care. For more information please visit: www.fsrh.org
- The Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RCOG) is a medical charity that champions the provision of high quality women’s healthcare in the UK and beyond. It is dedicated to encouraging the study and advancing the science and practice of obstetrics and gynaecology. It does this through postgraduate medical education and training and the publication of clinical guidelines and reports on aspects of the specialty and service provision.
- For further information please contact:
Harry Walker
Head of External Affairs & Standards
Email: externalaffairshead@fsrh.org
Telephone: 020 3751 8077