

6<sup>th</sup> March 2018

**FSRH CEU response to published systematic review:**

***The relationship between progestin hormonal contraception and depression:  
a systematic review***

Much recent media attention has been given to the subject of a potential association between hormonal contraception and depression. The FSRH CEU monitors and reports relevant emerging evidence.

A new systematic review published in *Contraception* examines the existing evidence relating to risk of depression associated with use of progestogen-only contraception (POC).<sup>1</sup> The authors of the review conclude that the bulk of the evidence does **not** support an association between use of POC and depression based on validated measures. Meta-analysis was not possible due to the heterogeneity of studies.

Many of the studies identified by the systematic review are limited by risk of bias, confounding and lack of a control group. Not all studies use validated tools to assess depression; some rely on self-reported symptoms.

None of the data from randomised controlled trials indicate an increased risk of depression associated with use of POC by women in the general population. Observational and descriptive studies do report that some women cite symptoms of depression as their reason for discontinuation of POC. Observational studies variously report higher, unchanged or lower depression scores associated with use of POC, but no clear association with depression is demonstrated for any of the progestogen-only contraceptive methods considered (depot medroxyprogesterone acetate, progestogen-only implant, levonorgestrel-releasing IUS and progestogen-only pill).

**CEU recommendation**

FSRH CEU advice remains unchanged by the findings of this review. Women should be informed by their contraceptive provider that there is no clear evidence that POC causes, worsens or improves depression. Some women do report mood changes during use of hormonal contraception, but in studies mood changes are also reported by women who are not using hormonal contraception. Women who find their mood adversely affected by a specific hormonal contraceptive preparation will not necessarily have the same problem with other hormonal contraceptives.

**References**

1. Worly BL, et al. The relationship between progestin hormonal contraception and depression: a systematic review. *Contraception* 2018.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.contraception.2018.01.010>



## Clinical Effectiveness Unit

The Faculty of Sexual & Reproductive  
Healthcare of the Royal College  
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*The Clinical Effectiveness Unit (CEU) was formed to support the Clinical Effectiveness Committee of the Faculty of Sexual and Reproductive Healthcare (FSRH), the largest UK professional membership organisation working at the heart of sexual and reproductive healthcare. The FSRH CEU promotes evidence based clinical practice and it is fully funded by the FSRH through membership fees. It is based in Edinburgh and it provides a member's enquiry service, evidence based guidance, new SRH product reviews and clinical audit/research. [Find out more here.](#)*