

FSRH CEU statement: Desogestrel 75mcg progestogen-only pills Hana[®] and Lovima[®] as Pharmacy medicines 21 July 2021

Progestogen-only contraceptive pills have, until now, been **Prescription-Only Medicines (POM)**. The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) has now approved licensing of two new brands of desogestrel 75mcg progestogen-only pill (POP) as **Pharmacy Medicines**. The products are Hana[®] (Laboratoire HRA Pharma) and Lovima[®] (Maxwellia Ltd).

Pharmacy medicines can be bought by the user from a pharmacy under the supervision of a pharmacist, without a prescription. A 3-month supply of Hana or Lovima can be sold (12 months for current or recent users aged 18 and over). These products are not on the General Sales List and are not, therefore, available off the shelf in pharmacies or other retail outlets.

Pharmacy provision of these desogestrel 75mcg POPs: safety

Hana and Lovima are equivalent to existing brands of desogestrel POP and current FSRH guidance applies to them. Available evidence and extensive experience of use of the desogestrel 75mcg POP indicate that it can be used from menarche to age 55 with very low risk of serious adverse events. There are therefore few medical contraindications. It is noted that Lovima, which contains soya, should not be used by individuals with peanut or soya allergy.

There may be some medical conditions (eg diabetes) that are considered to be contraindications to Pharmacy provision of Hana and Lovima that do not apply to *prescription* of a desogestrel 75mcg POP on prescription – criteria for provision of Pharmacy medicines commonly differ from those for their POM equivalents. There may also be some subtle differences in user information.

In addition to the information given in the Summary of Product Characteristics, additional materials are available to pharmacists providing Hana and Lovima. This includes a Pharmacy Training Guide and a Pharmacy Checklist that support Pharmacists to assess risk of existing pregnancy, assess medical eligibility, and inform users about contraceptive effectiveness, correct use, actions when a mistake is made with pill taking, and potential side effects and their management. Both products are supplied with comprehensive patient information.

Pharmacy provision of Hana and Lovima: safeguarding and consideration of wider sexual and reproductive health

It is recognised that a contraception consultation is an opportunity for safeguarding, for offering more effective long-acting reversible methods of contraception and for provision of wider sexual and reproductive health care, advice and information. However, accessing existing contraceptive services can, for some individuals, be a barrier to achieving effective contraception. The pharmacy setting may be more accessible and acceptable to those prepared to pay for this method.

Pharmacists already have training and experience in giving contraceptive advice and providing oral emergency contraception. The Pharmacy Training Guides and Pharmacy Checklists for Hana and Lovima support safeguarding, provision of information about alternative contraceptive methods, safer sex, cervical screening, and breast awareness and screening. The checklists facilitate identification of vaginal bleeding that could require investigation.

FSRH CEU conclusion

FSRH CEU welcomes this new development, which gives individuals the option to buy this safe, effective contraceptive method from a local pharmacy under the supervision of a pharmacist.

The desogestrel 75mcg POP will continue to be available free of charge on prescription from GP practices and Sexual Health clinics. There are no changes to FSRH guidance for provision of the desogestrel 75mcg POP on prescription.

The Clinical Effectiveness Unit (CEU) was formed to support the Clinical Effectiveness Committee of the Faculty of Sexual & 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 members' enquiry service, evidence-based guidance, new SRH product reviews and clinical audit/research. [Find out more here.](#)