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**Session:** [3.2.10 When 'Plan A' Fails: Emergency Contraception](#)

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**Author(s):** Christiane Chofakian, University of Sao Paulo  
Ana Paula Sato, University of Sao Paulo  
Ana Luiza Borges, University of Sao Paulo School of Nursing  
Luiza Akiko Hoga, University of Sao Paulo  
Elizabeth Fujimori, University of Sao Paulo  
Gizelton Alencar, University of Sao Paulo

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**Title of Abstract / Titre:** Knowledge of emergency contraception does not affect its use among Brazilian high-school adolescents

**Abstract Type / Type de résumé:** Research Abstract

**Topic / Sujet:** Family planning and adolescents

**Significance/background / Importance/contexte :** Adolescents are an important target group for improved access to all forms of contraception, including emergency contraception (EC). The onset of sexual activity generally occurs in this period of the lifespan, and adolescents tend to use contraceptive for relatively short periods of time, with high discontinuation and failure. Contraceptive prevalence among adolescents, especially females, may be conditioned by a very different combination of policies and access to information, services and methods, especially EC, across countries. Variations in use reflect disparities in cost and provider attitudes, but many individual factors can also influence EC use, such as peer networks and knowledge and awareness of the method. Although about three-quarters of Brazilian girls 15-19 years old are aware of EC, knowledge itself may not influence the method's use. In fact, the findings of studies of the relationship between EC awareness and knowledge and the method's use are inconsistent.

**Main question/hypothesis / Question principale/hypothèse:** Brazil possesses an unusual pattern of adolescent reproductive behavior with high prevalence of modern method use coexisting with a high prevalence of unwanted pregnancies, confirming the occurrence of inconsistent contraceptive use and contraceptive failures. Considering that emergency contraception is recommended exactly for such situations, we are interested in knowing what factors determine adolescent EC use. We wish to assess the influence of selected individual-level factors, e.g., knowledge of emergency contraception, sexual experience, and social status, on EC use among adolescent Brazilian high-school students.

**Methodology / Méthodologie:** This cross-sectional study was conducted with a probabilistic sample of single and sexually experienced 15-19 year-old adolescents (n=307) enrolled in public and private high-schools in the city of Aruja, Sao Paulo, Brazil. Students were selected based on stratified sampling by type of school (public or private) and then with systematic sampling of classes. Students answered a self-administered questionnaire at school between August and October 2011. Our theoretical framework was tested with Structured Equation Modeling. The dependent variable was the reported use of EC. The knowledge of EC was a latent variable not directly observed and measured by three specific questions. Other hypothesized explanatory variables were the age at first sexual intercourse, type of school (to proxy social status), and knowledge of someone who had already used the method. To assess model fit, we used as indices the Chi-Square Test of Model Fit, Comparative Fit Index, Tucker Lewis Index, Root Mean Square Error of Approximation and Weighted Root Mean Square Residual. The significance threshold adopted was 5% (p<0.05). We used Mplus 5.01 software for the statistical analysis.

**Results/key findings / Résultats/conclusions principales:** Adolescents from public schools were statistically different from those of private schools with respect to age and age at sexual debut. Almost 60% have used EC, no matter if attending a public or private school. All measurement models' coefficients were highly and statistically significant. The factor loadings of the latent variable indicators were higher than 0.60 and were statistically significant, indicating that the latent variable adequately predicted the variance in the model's co-variables. The fit statistics were satisfactory: Chi-square p-value ( $p=0.08$ ); Comparative Fit Index (0.97), Tucker Lewis Index (0.95), Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (0.04), and Weighted Root Mean Square Residual (0.71). In the structural equation model, knowledge of emergency contraception ( $SC = 0.100$ ,  $p = 0.176$ ), age of sexual debut ( $SC = -0.056$ ,  $p = 0.330$ ) and school type ( $SC = -0.049$ ,  $p = 0.498$ ) did not show significant associations with EC use. Only knowing someone who has already used EC showed a significant and direct association ( $SC = 0.450$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ).

**Knowledge contribution / Contribution aux connaissances sur le sujet:** Lifetime EC use was higher in our sample than levels reported in many other studies. Counter to our hypothesis, neither attending a public nor a private school or being knowledgeable about EC influenced its use by adolescent in the Aruja study setting. In fact, knowing someone who has used EC was significantly associated with its use. Since adolescent networks play an important role in shaping their social behaviors, it is no surprise to observe that shared experiences among friends about the use of EC can exercise more influence than knowledge about the method, economic status or sexual experience.

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