ATLANTA — Advanced provision of emergency contraceptive pills (ECPs) did not significantly decrease the rapid repeat pregnancy rate in a racially and ethnically diverse group of adolescents enrolled in a Colorado emergency maternity program. At the time of conception before conception, future family plans, and postpartum month, the investigators reviewed the charts of 275 predominantly primiparous 14- to 21-year-old women in that institution’s adolescent maternity program. At the time of the annual meeting of the North American Society for Pediatric and Adolescent Gynecology, Jeanelle Sheeder reported at the annual meeting of the North American Society for Pediatric and Adolescent Gynecology.

Advanced provision of emergency contraceptive pills (ECPs) has not had the anticipated impact on teen pregnancy. Ms. Sheeder and colleagues in the department of pediatrics at the University of Colorado Health Sciences Center in Denver assessed the sexual and contraceptive behavior of more than half (54%) of the women reporting unprotected intercourse during the first 6 postpartum months among teen mothers. "They were underutilized by 65% of the women and 7% engaged in augmented use," she said.

A total of 19 pregnancies occurred during the study period. "Teens who experienced unwanted pregnancies did not engage in more unprotected intercourse or ECP underuse than those who did not," Ms. Sheeder noted. "Of the 19 pregnancies, 9 were in young women who reported using some contraceptive method during the study period but their contraceptive use was inconsistently used. The remaining 10 pregnancies were not attributable to unrecognized contraceptive or ECP failure.

The findings suggest a high prevalence of unprotected intercourse during the first 6 postpartum months among teen mothers who say they don’t want a rapid repeat pregnancy, said Ms. Sheeder. "Additionally, it appears that the reason ECPs have not been used in this group is potential for a future pregnancy rate is because most teen mothers underutilize ECPs even when they have them on hand," she said.

The investigators reviewed the charts of 275 adolescents for demographic information, age at first intercourse, age at first pregnancy, and parity, history of prior sexually transmitted infections (STIs), age at first abnormal Pap smear, history of prior abnormal Pap smears, history of prior abnormal cervical biopsies, and history of prior abnormal vaginal cultures. The investigators also analyzed the use of ECPs in relation to unprotected intercourse.

During the course of the study, 44% of the young mothers had episodes of unprotected intercourse, said Ms. Sheeder, noting that "of these women, 15% reported one episode of unprotected intercourse, 24% had two to four episodes, and 6% had more than four episodes.

While more than half (54%) of the women reporting unprotected intercourse used ECPs, only 28% used them appropriately. "They were underutilized by 65% of the women and 7% engaged in augmented use," she said.

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