Emergency Contraception and Women’s Health - a sociocultural view

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Unwanted pregnancies are a major threat to the sexual, reproductive and general health of women. Effective contraceptive methods - short and long acting - put women into a state of infertility independent of sexual activity. There are however various factors which contribute to clinical situations in which this strategy of contraception is not working and where methods on demand are important. These situations are:

- Beginning and end of an intimate relationship
- Failure of adequate use of contraceptive methods
- Failure of the method itself
- Rape
- Sexual activity under the influence of drugs etc

The medical necessity and usefulness is thus very evident. The interesting question however is why EC encounters a considerable opposition in many parts of the world and sometimes even a furious resistance. One frequently quoted reason is that EC is misunderstood as abortion and thus facing the usual ethical opposition. It would then be just a question of education and information to dispel these concerns and make societies accept EC.

It is however important to take into account other factors which are less evident. There is a long standing tradition in many cultures, even in ours to be alarmed by anything which empowers women to control consequences of their sexual behaviour. It has taken time and efforts to "permit" women to have control over their fertility by use of modern contraception which is now considered responsible sexual behaviour. EC on the other hand is a means of making potentially "irresponsible", "unprotected" behaviour another option for women which increases their control and power even after the sexual act. So for EC to spread and be accepted sexual norms and morals have to become really women friendly.

A review of studies will show the present scenario regarding women friendliness over the globe.

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