

# Extended Access to Hormonal Contraception in Pharmacies: A Survey among Swiss Pharmacists

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**Background:** Worldwide the availability to Hormonal Contraceptives (HC) varies from over the counter (OTC) to prescription-only access. In various countries pharmacists are allowed to prescribe HC, although conditions may be different. In Switzerland, HC require a prescription from a physician, although Swiss law allows pharmacists to dispense prescription-only medications in justified exceptional cases without a valid physician's prescription. This study aimed to identify current dispensing practices for HC in Swiss pharmacies, pharmacists' knowledge about HC, and their opinion and interest about expanding access to HC.

**Methods:** Web-based survey among Swiss pharmacists.

**Results:** This survey was completed by 397 registered pharmacists and 331 (83%) were included for analysis. The survey showed that 21% of respondents regularly dispense HC without prescription and that a high number of participants are either very interested (57%,  $n = 189$ ) or rather interested (33%,  $n = 110$ ) in extended pharmacy access to HC. The majority did not or rather not support physician's prescription-only status (77%,  $n = 256$ ) or OTC availability (94%,  $n = 310$ ). Furthermore, surveyed pharmacists are willing to train for contraception services (90%,  $n = 299$ ). According to participants, resistance of physicians is the most relevant barrier to this service (88%,  $n = 292$ ).

**Conclusion:** Surveyed pharmacists are interested in extended access to HC.

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