

GPs' knowledge gap hinders uptake of long-term contraception

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(Medical Xpress) -- General practitioners (GPs) lack the knowledge and ability to adequately provide long-term contraceptive care to women in their practices, according to new research.

A study, published today in the [Medical Journal of Australia](#), analysed 3910 Australian GPs from Bettering the Evaluation and Care of Health (BEACH) data to determine current contraceptive management by general practitioners. Consultations with [female patients](#) aged 12–54 years were also analysed.

Researchers led by Head of the Department of General Practice at Monash University Professor Danielle Mazza, found General practitioners lack familiarity with long-acting reversible [contraception](#) (LARC), such as contraceptive implants and intrauterine devices (IUDs),

making it difficult for [women](#) to access this type of effective contraception.

The study found only 1.2 per cent of women in Australia used long-acting contraception despite the fact that LARC was an effective long-term contraceptive method requiring minimal maintenance once administered.

Professor Mazza said GPs might be unfamiliar with inserting and removing IUDs and implants due to a lack of technical training and increased medical indemnity insurance costs.

“A shift towards prescribing long-acting reversible contraception, as recommended in clinical guidelines, is yet to occur in Australian general practice,” Professor Mazza said.

“A better understanding of patient and GP perspectives on contraceptive choices could lead to more effective contraceptive use.”

LARC was discussed, prescribed or managed in approximately 15 of 100 contraception consultations managed in Australian general practice. The oral contraceptive pill, the most frequently prescribed contraception, was discussed in around 69 per cent of the consultations with women about contraceptives.

The study found some women consulted GPs less often about contraception, including Indigenous women, those who spoke a language other than English at home, and those who had a Commonwealth Health Care Card.

Professor Mazza said while women, aged 18–24 years, were more likely to see their GP about [emergency contraception](#), overall rates of management of emergency contraception in general practice were low.

“Most Australian women remain unaware of the over-the-counter availability of emergency contraception, have misconceptions about it, and want more information from their [general practitioners](#),” Professor Mazza said.

Provided by Monash University

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