

SOGC comment on the safety of oral contraceptives containing drospirenone

March 22, 2010 — Recently, the Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada (SOGC) has received reports that some Canadian women are questioning the safety of certain oral contraceptives, primarily those containing drospirenone (e.g. Yaz and Yasmin). Of particular concern is the perceived increased risk of venous thromboembolism (VTE).

First, it is important to note that all oral contraceptive products on the market, including those containing drospirenone, have received Health Canada approval based on rigorous testing. In addition, a literature review conducted by SOGC members has led to the conclusion that there is no reason for the SOGC or Canadian women to believe there are serious health concerns with any oral contraceptive, including those containing drospirenone.

Two of the highest quality "prospective" studies containing over 120,000 women (EURAS and Ingenix studies) showed no difference in VTE rates between currently marketed oral contraceptives. Also of note are the following considerations:

- The frequency of VTEs while using oral contraceptives is significantly less than the number of VTEs that are related to pregnancy.
- The rash of incidents reported to Health Canada may represent "stimulated reporting" – the phenomena whereby media attention stimulates physicians and patients to report adverse events.
- Since denominators are unknown and risk factors in women who were prescribed oral contraceptives containing drospirenone are unknown, these reports cannot provide valid evidence about the relative risks of VTE with various oral contraceptives.
- Oral contraceptives containing drospirenone offer additional benefits to women with acne and hirsutism, many of whom are overweight. These women are at increased risk for venous thromboembolism because of obesity.
- Pregnancy and the immediate postpartum period carry far greater risks of blood clots than the use of any oral contraceptive.

The SOGC advises all women who are currently using oral contraceptives to continue doing so as prescribed, unless they experience complications. If you have specific concerns regarding the oral contraceptive you are using, please speak to your health-care professional.