



For Immediate Release
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SURVEY CONDUCTED OF WISCONSIN HOSPITALS
Results Demonstrate Need to Pass Compassionate Care for Rape Victims Bill

Madison, WI- Today, the Compassionate Care for Rape Victims Coalition (CCRV) released the highlight results of a survey intended to examine Wisconsin hospital emergency departments' policies for providing information about and dispensing emergency contraception (EC) to victims of rape. Key findings of this survey show that at least 42% of Wisconsin hospitals are not providing EC on-site to rape victims and demonstrate the need to support legislation such as the Compassionate Care for Rape Victims Bill (SB 166/AB 305).

The survey conducted between December 2005 and April 2006, was sent to 123 Wisconsin hospitals with emergency departments. Eighty-nine percent or 109 of the hospitals responded to the survey.

While the American Medical Association guidelines require counseling and the provision of EC to rape victims, only 36 of the hospitals (33%) that responded acknowledged that they dispense EC unconditionally to rape victims with an additional 25 hospitals (23%) reporting they sometimes dispense largely based on the discretion of the health care provider (14 hospitals).

"Wisconsin's rape victims deserve compassionate care," said Lina Juarbe of The Healing Center, a sexual assault service provider. "We, as a state, should be treating our rape victims with a higher level of compassion."

EC is a high concentration of birth control pills that prevents pregnancy if taken within 120 hours of an assault. EC is at least 75% effective when taken within 72 hours. The sooner taken, the more effective EC is in preventing pregnancy. In the United States, more than 25,000 women a year become pregnant as a result of rape and 16,000 of these pregnancies end in abortion.

The Compassionate Care for Rape Victims Bill (SB 166/AB 305), introduced in March 2005, requires hospitals providing emergency medical care to rape victims to give information about emergency contraception and, if requested, dispense the medication. The bill has been introduced during the last several legislative sessions, but has yet to receive full legislative approval.

Rape victims across Wisconsin have expressed support for this legislation. "While studying abroad in Italy I was dragged into a quiet alley and raped by an older man wearing a nice white button-down shirt and a wedding ring. When I went to the Venice hospital, the receptionist immediately asked me if I wanted the morning after pill," stated Amanda Harrington. "In almost every aspect of my immediate treatment, except for the question about emergency contraception, I was judged, doubted and humiliated. I can only imagine how much harder my struggle to regain a sense of autonomy would be had that crucial choice about emergency contraception—one of the only choices left for me that evening—been made for me."

"In the aftermath of rape, victims have the right to regain control over their lives and make fully-informed decisions. The medical community has a responsibility to provide victims with information about and access to all of a victim's medical options - including EC - and leave the choices up to her," said Carmen Pitre of the Task Force on Family Violence.

For more information regarding Compassionate Care for Rape Victims, this report, and to view our Virtual News Conference, please visit: www.wiawh.org.

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American College of Nurse
Midwives- WI Chapter

Brown County Coalition for
Women's Health

Chippewa Valley Citizens for
Women's Health

Citizens for Women's Health,
Winnebago County

Community Advocates

Eau Claire County Coordinated
Community Response Team

Friends of Abused Families, Inc. of
Washington County

League of Women Voters of
Wisconsin

Medical Students for Choice

NARAL Pro-Choice Wisconsin

National Association of Social
Workers, WI Chapter

Options Fund, Inc, Eau Claire

PAVE: People Against a Violent
Environment, Beaver Dam

PAVE: Promoting Awareness,
Victim Empowerment, Madison

Planned Parenthood of Wisconsin

Reach Counseling Services,
Menasha

Religious Coalition for
Reproductive Choice WI

Republicans for Choice

Sexual Assault Treatment Center

Task Force on Family Violence

The Healing Center

United Council of UW Students

Wisconsin Alliance for Women's
Health

Wisconsin Association for
Perinatal Care

Wisconsin Coalition Against
Domestic Violence

Wisconsin Coalition Against
Sexual Assault

Wisconsin NOW

Wisconsin Women's Network
Reproductive Rights Task Force

Women's Medical Fund