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Speed or Safety: Which One Is More Important?

The morning-after pill is a type of emergency contraception. The pill contains the same drugs as a regular birth control pill and works the same way. This medication is for sale without a prescription to 17-year-old or older women and men in the U.S., but not in Korea. The Korean Food and Drug Administration (KFDA) attempted to change the policy in 2012 so that the morning-after pill would be sold at drugstores without a prescription in 2013 (Kang). After the KFDA announcement, people argued about whether or not the policy was appropriate in our society. Although purchasing the morning-after pill over-the-counter without a prescription has some benefits, the medication should be sold with a prescription for public safety.

Opponents of purchasing the pill with a prescription have claimed that it is difficult to reach a doctor to ask for a prescription on the weekend and holidays. According to NBCNews, “Taken within 72 hours of unprotected sex, a woman can lower the risk of pregnancy by up to 89 percent” (“FDA OKs”). Therefore, women, especially rape victims, should obtain and take the pill sooner to prevent unwanted pregnancy. For this reason, opponents point out that the medication should be sold without a prescription. However, easier accessibility of the drug could encourage people’s promiscuity and might increase the spread of sexually transmitted diseases. People would purchase the drugs after unprotected

sex rather than practicing prearranged contraception. In the *New York Times*, Sabrina Tavernise reported that the number of American women who use the morning-after pill have doubled in recent years. Although the pill should be used as an emergency pill, there is a possibility to misuse the pill. On the weekend and holidays in Korea, people can go to an emergency room and get a prescription cheaply, so people don't need to worry about getting the drug. Also, the pill cannot prevent pregnancy 100 percent. If a woman really doesn't want to have a baby after unwanted sex, it is better to go to a hospital and have a surgical abortion rather than depending on the drug.

Opponents also claim that the pill doesn't affect a woman's health, so it doesn't matter if it is sold over-the-counter without a prescription. According to Dr. Paul Blumenthal, a Johns Hopkins University gynecologist and Planned Parenthood adviser, "It's as safe as any other over-the-counter drug available in the U.S." (Neergaard). Moreover, opponents claim that even failing to prevent pregnancy, the pill won't cause any harm to a woman. Yet, it is not true because the pill has high doses of the hormone progesterin, so the pill can cause severe side-effects, such as blood clots, stroke and heart attacks. Unfortunately, if a woman has other diseases, like diabetes or liver problems, the risk of danger would be high. The main problem with buying the pill at drugstores without a prescription is some people don't pay attention to drug labels or specific instructions. If a prescription is required to buy the pill in Korea, people must go to a hospital and counsel with a doctor to get a prescription. The doctor should tell them how to use the pill and what the side effects are, so the patients would take care in using the medication. While using the medication, if the patients feel something wrong about their condition, they can directly call the doctor and discuss their health. Through this process, a woman can reduce the risk of using the pill. Furthermore, the World Health Organization has given a warning that "There may be a higher percentage of ectopic

pregnancies among emergency contraceptive pill failure cases than among a normal pregnant population” (Wright). As you can see, the morning-after pill also affects a woman’s future pregnancy, so people should use the pill carefully. Therefore, to prevent indiscriminate use of the pill and to protect a woman’s health, a doctor’s prescription should be required.

Clearly, the easy accessibility of morning-after pill can have some benefits for people, but it may threaten public safety, including women’s health. In addition, the drug is likely to encourage careless sex, so it might cause social problems. If obtaining the pill with a prescription is compelled by law, people seem to feel a responsibility for their sexual activity and will not abuse the drug. Particularly, the morning-after pill has a lack of medical tests for women’s safety, so the morning-after pill should be sold with a doctor’s prescription before verifying the safety. Following this debate in Korea, the Ministry of health and Welfare reversed the KFDA’s decision and ultimately announced that purchasing the morning-after pill needs a doctor’s prescription (Kang).

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