

YAZ: TAKING ORAL CONTRACEPTION TO THE NEXT STEP

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Oral contraceptive (OC) use in the U.S and around the world is characterized by high rates of inconsistent and incorrect use, leading to unintended pregnancy rates that adversely impact a variety of personal, medical, and economic aspects in the various societies around the world. Accordingly, more recent development of contraceptive options have sought to provide methods that not only are effective in preventing pregnancy but also result in beneficial side effect profiles and novel noncontraceptive benefits that may reduce inconsistent and incorrect use and improve overall contraceptive effectiveness. The development of newer progestins such as drospirenone were revolutionary in that many adverse events associated with OC use were related to the androgenic-profile of more conventional oral progestins; drospirenone was the first non-nortestosterone-derived oral progestin used in an oral contraceptive. The "next step" was to use drospirenone in a regimen that could provide novel and unique non-contraceptive benefits while providing highly effective contraceptive efficacy. Reducing the hormone-free interval to less than 7 days has been shown to reduce ovarian activity and follicular activity compared to conventional 21/7 regimens. Studies have shown that a 20 mcg ethinyl estradiol/3 mg drospirenone pill in a 24/4 regimen (Yaz™) was effective in not only preventing pregnancy but was also effective in the treatment of mild to moderate acne and treating the symptoms of premenstrual dysphoric disorder (PMDD), a severe form of premenstrual syndrome (PMS). Indeed, Yaz™ is the only pill in the U.S. that is approved for 3 distinct indications: pregnancy prevention, treatment of acne, and treatment of the symptoms of PMDD. New contraceptive methods that provide a more salutary side effect profile and novel noncontraceptive benefits will likely provide contraception that is more likely to be used in a consistent and correct manner and exert a more profound positive impact on the lives of women who use these methods and their families.