

The Pill, condoms and IUDs



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We've touched on the subject of contraceptives in past articles, partly because one of Durbin's important divisions (Clinic Sales) has a fast-growing range of sexual health products and partly because contraception is such a vital area in the global healthcare market.

It never fails to fascinate me how different the preferred contraceptive methods are all over the world. In the UK, the most popular products are the birth control pill or condoms. In France, IUDs (intra uterine devices – either a “M” or “T” shaped plastic frame wound with copper wire that's inserted into the uterus to prevent effective conception) lead the way. The Middle East is still a relatively new market, but from our in-house research (mainly based on feedback from recent Arab Health shows) it's clear that demand for all contraceptive types is increasing dramatically year on year.

Worldwide, IUDs are probably the most common method of contraception.

We sell many different types to offer maximum choice, but the flagship of our product range is the TT380. This IUD has been recognized as the gold-standard product in various peer-reviewed journals, including *The Gynaecological Practice* (2001), *The Obstetrician and Gynaecologist* (2002) and *The Journal of Family Planning and Reproductive Healthcare* (2002).

The TT380 is highly regarded for several reasons. First, it has a 10-year life span in the patient unlike other IUDs which need to be replaced every five years; second, it has additional bands of copper on the horizontal arms which give the highest efficacy because the contraceptive effect due to copper ions killing the sperm appears to be enhanced by having these bands of copper close to the openings of the Fallopian tubes; third, if it is fitted when the patient is over the age of 40, it can remain in place until after the

menopause; finally, it is extremely cost-effective.

Like all IUDs, it is as effective a contraceptive as female sterilisation, but instantly reversible upon removal. Other advantages are numerous. The IUD is a 'fit and forget' device – in other words, it works totally independent of when and how often intercourse takes place. It may be fitted even if the patient is breastfeeding. It is not affected by any other medication. It may be used as a post-coital contraceptive up to five days after intercourse. It may be fitted immediately following a miscarriage and around four weeks after a vaginal birth or caesarean section. An IUD can also be fitted in women who have never been pregnant, although it's worth pointing out that the Mini TT 380 is even better for this group as this is the only banded copper T device designed for use in the nulliparous.

Of course, an IUD shouldn't be fitted in a patient suffering from a sexually transmitted infection (because it offers no protection against transmission of the STD) or if the patient is having high-risk intercourse for the same reason. Even so, it's not difficult to see why this method is becoming more and more popular and why, in recent months, our Durbin Clinic Sales team reports that the IUD market is their biggest growth area. ■

Durbin PLC is a British company based in South Harrow, London. Established in 1963, the company specialises in supplying quality assured pharmaceuticals, medical equipment and consumable supplies to healthcare professionals and aid agencies in over 140 countries. As well as reacting rapidly to emergency situations, Durbin PLC responds to healthcare supply needs from local project level to national scale programmes. Web address: www.durbin.co.uk Email: L.morgan@durbin.co.uk