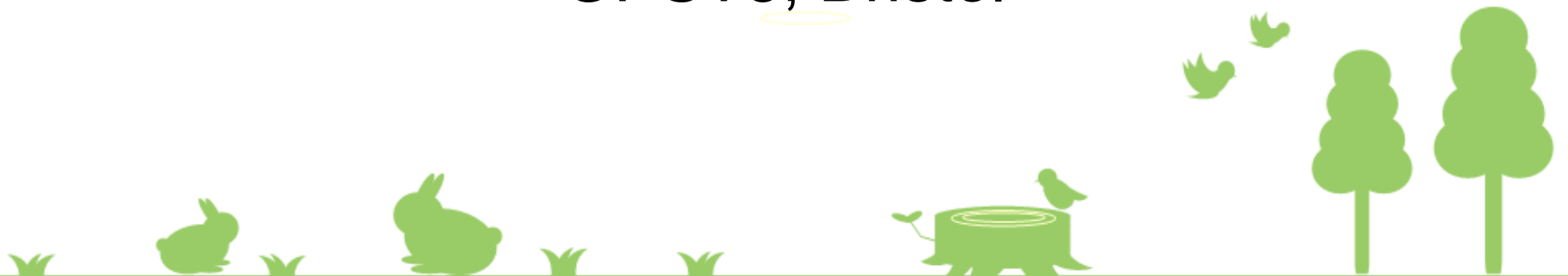


WMCASH Symposium
Saturday 3rd October 2020

Ethical Choices in Contraception

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Ethical Choices in Contraception

- Autonomy, beneficence, non-maleficence, and justice
- Choices for vegan patients
- Environmental impact of contraceptives
- Ethical procurement
- Population growth and the environment and the role of contraception



Concern for the Environment

- .Thankfully increasing
- .9/10 adults in England concerned re increasing threats to the environment
- .Greta Thunberg, David Attenborough, Extinction Rebellion, Doctors for XR
- .One of the reasons people choose to 'Go Vegan'



Going Vegan

- x4 increase 2014-2019
- Now est 600,000 in UK (1.16%)
- 3 main reasons:
 - Animal welfare
 - The environment
 - Health
- What does it mean?



Veganism

“A way of living which seeks to exclude, as far as is possible and practicable, all forms of exploitation of, and cruelty to, animals for food, clothing or any other purpose.”

.Diet

.Lifestyle – materials, products, places



How does being vegan help the environment?

- EAT-Lancet Commission
- Meat = land, water and energy intensive
- Growing demand, and growing population
- Industrial meat production → GHG emissions, deforestation, desertification, soil degradation, pollution of land and water
- Regenerative agriculture → carbon sink, restoration





Prescribing for vegan patients

- All medicines in the UK tested on animals
- ... 'as far as practically possible'
- Oral contraceptives: lactose, magnesium stearate
- Hormonal contraception: natural or synthetic, source not always clear
- Animal sources: conjugated equine estrogens, other



Contraceptive options for vegans

- .PO unlikely to be vegan
- .If hormones and animal testing acceptable:
 - IUS, implant, injection, patch/ring
- .If avoiding hormones but accepting testing:
 - IUD
- .Condoms: most not vegan (casein) but some brands are (Fair Squared, Glide, Hanx). Male only.
- .Fertility awareness method



Failure rate of contraceptive methods

Contraceptive	Percentage of women with unintended pregnancy within 1 year	
	Typical use	Perfect use
No method	85	85
Withdrawal	29	18
Diaphragm	16	6
Female condom	21	5
Male condom	15	2
Combined pill/progesterone only pill/contraceptive patch/contraceptive ring	8	0.3
Depo-Provera	3	0.3
Copper intrauterine contraceptive device	0.8	0.6
Levonorgestrel intrauterine system	0.2	0.2
Contraceptive implant	0.05	0.05
Male sterilisation	0.15	0.1
Female sterilisation	0.5	0.5
Fertility awareness	24	1–9
Lactational amenorrhoea	2	0.5

Contraception and its ethical considerations. Sinead Morga, Shreelata Datta. Obstetrics, Gynaecology and Reproductive Medicine 28:10. 2018 Elsevier Ltd.



The impacts of contraception

- Direct impacts of the products themselves
 - Cradle to grave. Life Cycle Assessment.
- Wider social and environmental considerations
 - Ethical procurement
 - Population growth



Environmental Impacts: condoms

•Life cycle assessment – mostly production onwards

Int J Life Cycle Assess (2020) 25:964–979

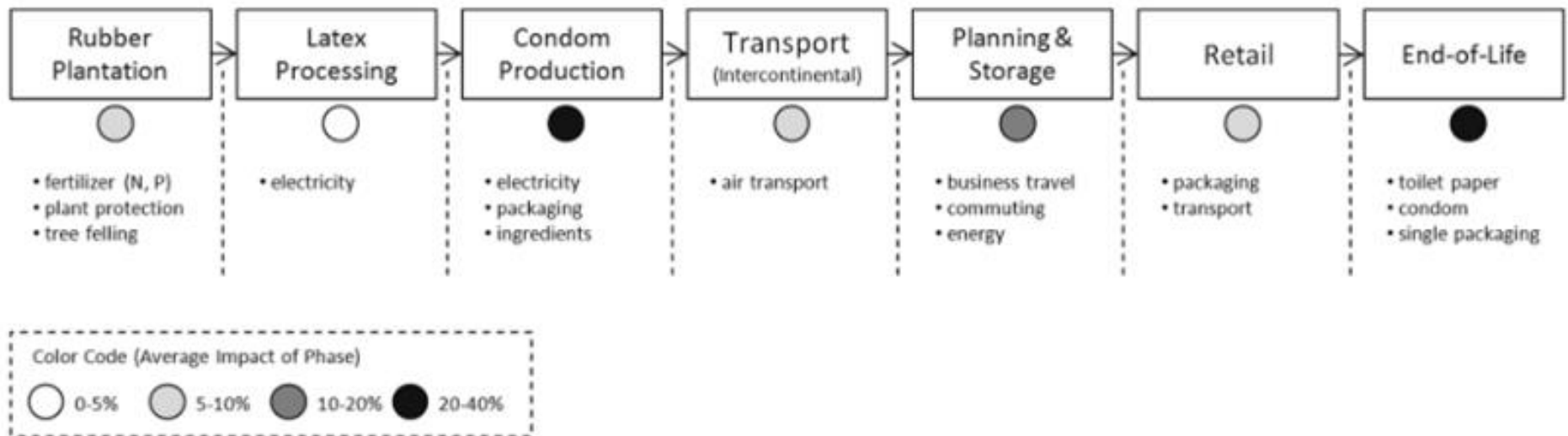


Fig. 7. Environmental hotspots (equal weighing of impact categories)

Environmental impacts: Hormonal Contraception/IUD

- ?any LCA's
- Packaging waste, and hormone excretion
 - LARC generate less packaging, and likely reduce sanitary waste
 - Amount of hormone compounds in water from contraception low vs other sources, but do have negative impact
 - But also averts some oestrogen release through preventing pregnancy
- IUD least impact



Ethical Trade & Procurement

.BMA Ethical Procurement for Health

– “...an uncomfortable paradox in providing healthcare in the NHS at the expense of workers’ health in its supply chains”

– www.ethicaltrade.org/ethical-procurement-for-health

.Staff power – ethical champions

.NHS Supply Chain – greater visibility

– “Ethical sourcing .. key priority .. Labour Standards Assurance System for our high risk categories ... looking to continually map risk



Wider considerations

- .Climate change
- .Impact of population growth on climate change taboo
- .Environmental impact of any contraceptive pales in comparison to that of another person
- .Huge unmet need for contraception globally



The unmet need for contraception

.45% of pregnancies and one third of births in England are unplanned

.99m unintended pregnancies worldwide each year, 44% of all pregnancies

- 56m induced abortion (40% unsafely)
- Remainder unintended births/miscarriages



1/3 of births in Britain are unplanned or ambivalent



Impact on women:

- obstetric complications
- later for antenatal care
- antenatal and postnatal depression



Impact on children:

- birthweight
- mental and physical health
- do less well in cognitive tests



Wider considerations

- Population predicted to rise 7.7bn → 10bn by 2050
- Most growth in developing world
- But high income countries much higher footprint
- Barriers to contraception present worldwide
- Equal access, gender equality, empowerment of women: key to reducing birth rates



Overall

- Any contraception better than no contraception
- Continuing efforts to improve access to contraception, continued research and development into novel methods, and 'greening' of every stage of the life cycle of contraceptives will all help to reduce the impact on the environment
- The most ethical choice in contraception is the one an informed patient makes, based on their individual clinical needs, and their core values



Thank you!

•Any questions?



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