



Royal College of
Obstetricians &
Gynaecologists

Rt Hon Matt Hancock MP
Secretary of State for Health and Social Care
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

06 February 2020

Dear Mr Hancock,

RE: Ongoing HRT and contraceptive shortages

As you are aware, over the past year many women in the UK have been unable to access their hormone replacement therapy (HRT) products due to ongoing manufacturing and supply issues. The Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RCOG), the Faculty of Sexual and Reproductive Healthcare (FSRH) and the British Menopause Society (BMS) have received multiple queries from distressed women who are having to find alternative products or even go without.

More recently, we have become aware of a shortage of contraceptives. As well as this affecting the physical and mental wellbeing of girls and women, we are concerned this situation may lead to a rise in unplanned pregnancies and abortions, whilst inadvertently affecting the most vulnerable in our society.

We are grateful to the Department of Health and Social Care for working closely with suppliers to re-introduce some of these products to the market. As such, we understand that the HRT supply issue should begin to improve by February 2020. We have also appreciated being kept regularly informed by the medical supplies team with regards to these positive developments.

However, a number of HRT medications and contraceptives remain unavailable, some until the end of this year, and some with no timeline as to when they will be back on the market. This is highly concerning for the health and wellbeing of girls and women and will undoubtedly contribute to health inequalities. Furthermore, it remains unclear why these shortages have occurred and the lack of transparency around this is extremely frustrating.

We feel sure you will agree that there is an urgent need for the Department of Health to address these supply constraints. To do so, we are calling on the Department of Health and Social Care to set up a working group with industry, regulatory agencies and our organisations to get to the root of why shortages in both HRT and contraceptives have occurred. This working group must work together to ensure that this situation is prevented from happening again.

With best wishes,

Dr Edward Morris, President, Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists
Mr Haitham Hamoda, Chairman, British Menopause Society
Dr Asha Kasliwal, President, Faculty of Sexual and Reproductive Healthcare