

# Global Health Newsletter

March 2024

## Staten Island University Hospital

Madi Lindauer, MD MPH

### Americas

#### Over the Counter Birth Control

Opill, a daily progestin-only pill from Perrigo, the first oral contraceptive pill available without a prescription in drug stores nationwide, started shipment on March 4<sup>th</sup> and will be on shelves by the end of the month. Consumers can buy it in drugstores, convenience stores, supermarkets or online. Although the drug has been around for decades, it used to require a prescription and the process to change that took about nine years.



<https://www.cnn.com/2024/03/04/health/opill-otc-birth-control-pill-available-in-stores/index.html>

Before Opill's got approval in the United States, over 100 countries already allowed over-the-counter access to birth control. To get FDA approval for the non-prescription status in the US, Opill had to meet specific criteria.

Users should be able to take it responsibly without a healthcare practitioner's guidance, and it must have low potential for abuse and misuse, along with adhering to strict labeling requirements.

Opill costs \$19.99 per month, but a three-month supply is \$49.99, and a six-month supply is \$89.99. Perrigo also has patient assistance program for those without insurance or facing financial challenges, making Opill accessible to a broader audience.

#### Further Reading

<https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2024/03/04/1235404522/opill-over-counter-birth-control-pill-contraceptive-shop#:~:text=Perrigo%20Company%20plc->

<https://www.cnn.com/2024/03/04/health/opill-otc-birth-control-pill-available-in-stores/index.html>

### Middle East/Northern Africa

#### Egypt Gets Funding from European Union for Refugees

The European Union's recent announcement of an \$8.1 billion USD funding package for Egypt, revealed on March 17<sup>th</sup>, aims to bolster the country's efforts in addressing the migrant flow towards the EU while enhancing economic prospects. The funding is designated to fortify sectors crucial for economic growth, including renewable energy, trade, and security, spanning the next three years to bolster Egypt's fluctuating economy.



<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2024/mar/17/egypt-eu-deal-refugees-mediterranean>

With a population of approximately 106 million, Egypt grapples with soaring inflation rates, making economic stability a pressing concern. Moreover, Egypt serves as both an origin and transit point for migrants and asylum seekers seeking refuge in Europe. Notably, an estimated 500,000 refugees from Sudan alone have sought shelter in Egypt, fleeing the ravages of civil conflict.

However, the funding deal has drawn scrutiny from human rights activists, who voice concerns over its apparent lack of emphasis on human rights reforms. Egypt has faced criticism for its treatment of migrants, prompting apprehensions that the absence of concerted efforts to address these human rights issues may fail to avert potential political or economic crises in the future.

Since 2021, the EU has entered into similar agreements with 14 other countries, many of which have been criticized for their disregard for human rights and their failure to mitigate migration challenges effectively.

#### Further reading

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2024/03/15/eu-deal-egypt-rewards-authoritarianism-betrays-eu-values>

<https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/analysis/2023/10/19/eu-doubling-down-deadly-failed-migration-strategy>

## Asia/Pacific

### Doctors Strike in South Korea

Nearly 12,000 junior doctors (93 percent of the trainee workforce) from 100 hospitals are participating in a strike in South Korea, that began on February 20<sup>th</sup>. The strike was sparked by the government's proposal to expand the recruitment of medical students and increase the number of available medical student positions by 2,000 up from the current 3,058. This initiative was introduced in response to the shortage of physicians in the country. South Korea currently has 3.7 physicians per 1,000 people, which stands in contrast to the 2.1 overserved in other developed nations. Despite this, South Korean hospitals possess adequate bed capacity to serve the population.



<http://www.channelnewsasia.com/asia/south-korea-doctors-workstop-protest-against-government-1188896>

The contention among doctors is that the additional trainees will compromise the quality of healthcare services. Rather than increasing the number of medical student positions, physicians advocate for an increase in medical fees. In South Korea, most doctors are not employed by the state but medical fees are strictly controlled by the government. Many argue that the core issue lies in the fact that medical students are inclined towards higher-paying specialties with better work-life balance, such as plastic surgery and dermatology. Physicians propose an adjustment in medical fees for lower-paying specialties like internal medicine, pediatrics and obstetrics and gynecology to incentivize medical students to pursue these specialties.

In response to the strike, the Ministry of Health has initiated procedures that could result in losing their license if they continue to strike. Fearing such consequences, many of the physicians have returned to work; however, thousands remain on strike. In attempt to address the healthcare gap caused by the strike, South Korea has deployed military physicians.

#### Further reading

<https://www.euronews.com/health/2024/03/05/why-have-10000-junior-doctors-in-south-korea-resigned-in-protest-against-the-government>

## Sub-Saharan Africa

### Condom Costs Surge in Nigeria

The escalating prices of fundamental contraceptives such as condoms and oral family planning pills have significantly decreased accessibility in Nigeria. Over the past year, the cost of condoms has surged by an 50 and 350 percent , while oral contraceptives have seen a 50 percent increase. The exorbitant cost of condoms acts as a deterrent to their use, particularly impacting vulnerable and low-income populations, including sex workers. Consequently, there are growing concerns regarding the potential rise in Sexually Transmitted Infections and the prevalence of unsafe abortions due to unwanted pregnancies. These challenges, coincide with a worsening economic situation and decline in the value of the national currency, the naira.



<https://www.premiumpost.com/health/health-news/377202-only-34-of-nigerians-use-condoms-survey.html>

Nigeria, with a population of 200 million, stands as the most populous country in Africa and the sixth most populous globally. If current demographic trends persist, Nigeria is projected to become the third most populous country in the world by 2050.

A 2021 report by the AIDS Healthcare Foundation and the National Agency for the Control of AIDS revealed that Nigerians currently utilize approximately 587 million condoms annually, yet the country requires at least 1.15 billion condoms per year to achieve 90 percent coverage. Consequently, Nigeria faces a shortfall of 564 million condoms to attain this target. Given the surge in condom price, there is a risk that the number of condoms purchased may decline rather than increase, exacerbating the existing deficit in coverage.

#### Further reading

[https://www.vanguardngr.com/2024/03/baby-boom-sti-alarm-as-condom-oral-contraceptives-prices-soar/#google\\_vignette](https://www.vanguardngr.com/2024/03/baby-boom-sti-alarm-as-condom-oral-contraceptives-prices-soar/#google_vignette)

## Europe

### France Amends Constitution

Abortion in France has been legal since 1975; however, in response to the United States Supreme Court ruling to overturn Roe v. Wade in 2022, the President of France, Emmanuel Macron, was motivated to take stricter measures to protect the right of abortion. As a result, the France Parliament voted to making abortion a “guaranteed freedom” in the French Constitution. Lawmakers from both houses of the French Parliament voted 780 to 72 in favor of the measure which cleared the required three-fifths majority needed to amend the French Constitution.



<https://www.cnn.com/2024/03/04/europe/france-abortion-constitution-intl/index.html>

France limits an elective abortion to 14 weeks (a shorter timeframe than the 15 week nationwide ban in the United States). Later abortions are permitted if the pregnancy is deemed a risk to the woman’s physical or psychological health or the fetus has certain anomalies.

Following the vote, the Eiffel Tower was illuminated with the words “my body my choice.” The government held a celebratory ceremony on International Women’s Rights day, Friday March 8<sup>th</sup>. Prime Minister Gabriel Attal made a speech before the lawmakers and said: “We are sending the message to all women: Your body belongs to you and no one has the right to control it in your stead.”

#### Further reading

<https://www.cnn.com/2024/03/04/europe/france-abortion-constitution-intl/index.html>

<https://www.nytimes.com/2024/03/04/world/europe/france-abortion-rights-constitution.html>

# What's New at Northwell's Center for Global Health?

Daniel Leon MBA PMP

## Ukraine Mayor Visits Northwell to Discuss Healthcare Advancements

Following a site visit by the Center for Global Health to Bucha, Ukraine, where an ambulance was delivered to a local medical center, Mayor Anatolli Fedoruk, the host of the event, visited Northwell in New York City. During his stay, Mayor Fedoruk met with Dr. Eric Cioe Pena, Northwell's VP of Global Health, to discuss implementing Northwell's global programming to enhance the Ukrainian healthcare system, both during and after the war, as soldiers return to their families.



To kick off the tour, Mayor Fedoruk and Dr. Cioe Pena met with Dr. John Berkowitz, Medical Director of Emergency Medical Services at Northwell, for a comprehensive tour of Northwell's Centralized Transfer Center (CTC). They discussed telehealth capabilities and how Northwell is using technology to assist Ukrainian doctors with cases resulting from the war. To date, Northwell has supported over 250 patient cases.



They also visited The Center for Learning Innovation (CLI) for a tour and met with their SVP, Jason Naiditch, and his team to explore opportunities for Northwell contribution to the establishment of Bucha's first-ever training center. With plans underway to build a healthcare center in Bucha dedicated to supporting families affected by the war, it was fitting to connect with Northwell's SVP of Bioengineering, who is already collaborating with Ukrainians on 3D prosthetic printing innovation. This collaboration aims to provide guidance on manufacturing prosthetics for soldiers returning from the war.

The trip concluded with a lunch where Northwell leaders had the opportunity to meet with the Mayor and express their support. Looking ahead, the Center for Global Health is gearing up to travel to Ukraine in May to host the inaugural Mental Health Consortium. This event will bring together leaders from around the world to devise strategies for supporting mental health services for families affected by war.

## Global Surgery and Anesthesia Gear Up for Guyana Trainings

After a successful 2023 trip to Guyana in May, where the global surgery team cleared a backlog of 50 critical hernia cases, they are gearing up for their next mission. Led by SVP Nathan Christopherson and Dr. Gainosuke Sugiyama, Chair of Surgery at LIJ, the team will head to Georgetown's Public Hospital alongside Northwell's SVP of Anesthesiology, Dr. Joseph Marino, to conduct regional block training. This initiative aims to enhance Guyana's pain management capabilities.



This marks the surgery and anesthesia team's second international mission. In 2022, both teams traveled to Ecuador, completing 100 in-kind surgeries for the Ministry of Health of Quito. Led by Dr. Gene Coppa, Chair of Surgery for Northwell, the annual surgical trip to Ecuador addressed backlogs of hernias, cleft lips, and bariatric weight loss surgeries."

## Upcoming Lectures/Conferences

### **The Ethics of Conducting Health Research in Humanitarian Settings: Principles, Practice, and Reflections from the Field**

When: Apr 4, 2024 10:00 AM

The goal of virtual panel is to facilitate a multidisciplinary discussion on the ethical complexities of conducting health research in humanitarian settings that can inform ongoing work and future collaborations in this topic. This panel is part of a series of events focused on “Managing Health during Humanitarian Crises” that aim to identify research gaps regarding health in humanitarian settings, develop an agenda for future scholarly work, and generate synergies among researchers.

<https://yale.zoom.us/meeting/register/tJMcO6qrjliHN1F7lcQy35R939BluTarHqu#/registration>

### **Infant and Young Child Feeding in Emergencies during Infectious Disease Outbreaks**

This eLearning course is designed to equip learners with foundational knowledge on how to protect, promote, and support recommended infant and young child feeding (IYCF) practices in humanitarian settings during outbreak preparedness and response. It was developed by the READY initiative and the Infant Feeding in Emergencies (IFE) Core Group.

<https://kayaconnect.org/course/info.php?id=6174#:~:text=This%20eLearning%20course%20is%20designed,during%20outbreak%20preparedness%20and%20response.>

**Malawi's Tumaini Festival.** The refugee-led event takes place in Dzaleka Refugee Camp attracting festival-goers from both inside and outside the camp.

Now in its 10th year, Tumaini – which means ‘hope’ in Swahili – drew 50,000 people in 2023, with over 115 performers from all over Africa. It is the refugee camp’s largest source of commercial income. Trésor Nzengu Mpauni, the festival’s founder, lived in the camp after leaving Democratic Republic of Congo. He says the festival “comes to bring joy and to relieve the stress and just help people see life in a more positive and lighter way.”

<https://youtu.be/N3WmkkVE26k>