

# O1

## WHAT WOMEN WANT. PLASTIC WASTE, THE ENVIRONMENT AND TOPICAL OESTROGEN APPLICATORS

*A.S. Da Silva, M. O'Kane, C. Davis, A. Rantell, G. Araklitis, D. Robinson, King's College Hospital, UK*

### Introduction

Environmental consciousness and the role of plastic waste are increasing<sup>1</sup>. Each topical oestrogen Ovestin<sup>®</sup> prescription includes one reusable plastic applicator. Vagifem<sup>®</sup> supplies once daily single-use plastic applicators. User preference about the role of plastic in personal healthcare is not fully understood.

### Aims

We aim to conduct a service evaluation of user experience with topical oestrogen applicators and product material preference.

### Methods

Topical oestrogen users attending routine urogynaecology outpatient clinics were requested to complete a qualitative questionnaire on user experience and applicator material preference.

### Results

130 responses were collected, 73 Ovestin users and 57 Vagifem users. Mean age was 66.6 years (range 49–85). Mean duration of use was 35.5 months (0.5–180). Discontinuation rate was 24.7% and 34.6% for Ovestin and Vagifem users, respectively. <1.9% experienced side effects. Satisfaction with applicators and ease of use were similar in both groups. There was a higher report of the product being “messy” (37.5% versus 19.2%,  $p=0.028$ ) and “not hygienic” (47.9% versus 18.9;  $p<0.001$ ) by Ovestin users.

Women <65 years demonstrated a greater concern about plastic use and the impact on the environment compared to women over 65 years (81.% versus 56.9%;  $p=0.002$ ). The younger cohort prefers reusable applicators (66.2%) compared to single-use applicators (33.8%)  $p=0.005$ . There was no statistically significant difference in preference for women over 65 years. Only 24.6% and 39.1% of women <65years would prefer applicators made of metal or cardboard, respectively.

### Discussion

This study demonstrates that younger post-menopausal women showed greater concern for plastic waste and its impact on the environment, with a preference for reusable products. Manufacturers of health products and prescribers should be aware of this growing trend. With similar overall satisfaction and side-effect profiles, users should be made aware of different types of applicators available to decide which product to choose.

**References:**

1. Rizan, C., Mortimer, F., Stancliffe, R., and Bhutta, M.F. (2020). Plastics in healthcare: time for a re-evaluation. *J R Soc Med* 113, 49–53. [10.1177/0141076819890554](https://doi.org/10.1177/0141076819890554).
2. McGain, F., Story, D., and Hendel, S. (2009). An audit of intensive care unit recyclable waste. *Anaesthesia* 64, 1299–1302. [10.1111/j.1365-2044.2009.06102.x](https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2044.2009.06102.x).