

IUD anxiety has decreased — but for how long?

By Joanna Weiss | June 13, 2017

When it came to their health, many women were anxious after the presidential election. And one specific concern — the possible loss of mandated coverage for birth control — clearly made its way into medical offices. Data from the athenahealth network showed a 21 percent increase in intrauterine device (IUD) visits in the three months after the election, compared to that same period in the previous year.

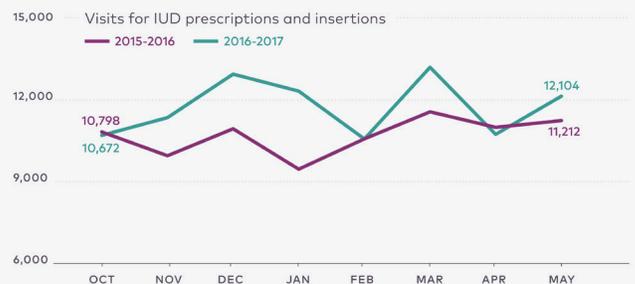
But in recent months, a new study shows, demand for the long-acting reversible contraception has dropped back nearly to pre-election levels.

The analysis examined more than 1.4 million visits for IUD management that took place from October 2015 through May 2017 at 2,500 practices on the athenahealth network. Between February and May of 2017, researchers found, visit volume rose an average of only 5 percent compared to the same period in 2016. That's approximately 500 and 600 IUD-related visits per day.

Researchers suggest that drop could be a sign that women's anxiety about losing coverage without copays for contraception, as mandated

by the Affordable Care Act, has decreased overall. Or it could suggest that women who were most concerned moved quickly after the election to secure IUDs, devices that last for years, but cost \$500 to \$1,000 for the initial insertion.

Volume of IUD visits approaching 2016 levels



Source: athenaResearch
Sample: Over 2,500 practices on athenaNet providing contraceptive management to over 1.4 million patients since October 2015

"It's possible that there was a relatively finite number of women who were especially concerned about what the Trump administration would do," says Josh Gray, vice president of research at athenahealth. "Perhaps most of them have acted on that worry already."

Recent news about healthcare policy could change that dynamic again. The House healthcare bill to replace the ACA, considered dead in March, is now winding its way through Congress again. And news broke in May that the Department of Health and Human Services has drafted a rule – which doesn't require a change in law – that would expand the number of employers and insurers that could qualify for exemptions from the ACA's contraception coverage mandate.

"The news out of Washington could spark a new wave of anxiety," Gray says. "We'll be tracking the data to see if demand for IUDs spikes again."

*Joanna Weiss is executive editor of athenaInsight.
Data analysis by Philip Galebach.*



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