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Perrigo Partnership Makes Opill Star Player On WNBA's Reproductive Health Advocacy Team

by [Malcolm Spicer](#)

Less than a month into launching sales of first oral contraceptive approved for US OTC sales, Perrigo announces multi-year partnership with WNBA focused on building confidence, strength and health equity for women.

[Perrigo Company PLC](#) is in a full court press for promoting its Opill OTC oral contraceptive through a partnership with the Women's National Basketball Association, which made reproductive health advocacy one of its social justice efforts this year.

The Dublin-based firm on 9 April, less than a month into launching sales of the first daily oral contraceptive approved for OTC sales in the US, announced a multi-year partnership with the WNBA focused on building confidence, strength and health equity for women.

The WNBA also recently announced an extension of its marketing partnership with skin care, makeup, and fragrance firm Glossier Inc. (*see box below*).

"Opill is changing the game in reproductive health, just like the WNBA's game-changing role in sports and pop culture. Building upon our shared commitment to foster equitable access and to increase health education, the goal of this partnership is to prioritize dialogue and resources in support of women's reproductive health," said Leila Bahbah, Perrigo's US women's health brand lead, in the announcement.

The firm which maintains its primary operations headquarters in Grand Rapids, MI, not only is leveraging marketplace awareness of Opill with its WNBA collaboration, but also linking the brand to women's basketball when its popularity is soaring on the play of college athletes including Caitlin Clark at the University of Iowa and Angel Reese at Louisiana State University.

Clark and Reese are among the players who will be drafted by WNBA teams on 15 April. Perrigo's collaboration launches that day in Brooklyn, NY, with the firm as an associate partner of the 2024 WNBA Draft, which has State Farm Insurance as its primary sponsor. Financial terms of Perrigo's support weren't disclosed.

Colie Edison, the WNBA's chief growth officer, said the league is "committed to addressing issues that matter to the players."

"Expanding access to reproductive healthcare is one of those key issues. It's great to be working with a partner whose values align and authentically integrates into the health equity work our players are dedicated to," Edison added in the announcement.

The 12-team WNBA also said it's concentrating its social justice efforts on civic engagement and reproductive health advocacy. Its multifaceted approach to spotlight civic engagement initiatives will focus on understanding voting's influence on reproductive health matters within communities of color.

Perrigo and the WNBA, which begins its season on 14 May, also are collaborating on a program to reach students on college campuses and through additional educational events to celebrate women who are changing the game and educate WNBA fans about the first OTC option for a daily oral contraceptive available since late March at stores and online, including the brand's website.

HRA Brings In-House Contraceptive Launch Experience

Perrigo's sponsorship of the WNBA is the next step in its largest launch project ever for unprecedented US nonprescription access to an oral contraceptive available through a new

More Of Glossier For More Of WNBA

Glossier launched its collaboration as the WNBA's first beauty product partner in 2020 to promote the extension of its Body Hero line. The campaign, during the WNBA's season played in a single location due to the COVID-19 pandemic, featured WNBA legend Sue Bird and other players.

Extending the partnership keeps Glossier as one of the WNBA's official beauty partners and will feature its products across the WNBA's media partners, platforms and social media channels.

The New York-based firm will bring more Glossier products to more WNBA athletes and fans. Distribution will include the firm participating in "tentpole events" and launching WNBA-themed content amplifying players' voices and stories.

"Glossier celebrates beauty in real life and our partnership with the WNBA embodies that philosophy," said CEO Kyle Leahy in the firm's March announcement.

drug application its HRA Pharma subsidiary for a full switch of its 0.75mg norgestrel progestin-only formulation approved in July 2023. (Also see "[First OTC Birth Control Pill Approved In US Will Launch With Three-Year Market Exclusivity](#)" - HBW Insight, 13 Jul, 2023.)

Through HRA, Perrigo can look back for experience promoting an OTC oral contraceptive. HRA, supported the nonprescription UK launch of another progestin-only formulation, Hana, approved in 2021 before Perrigo's acquisition, with significant above-the-line media investment, including digital advertising and a television ad which highlighted the more straightforward access to contraception the product gave women with busy lives.

Hana (75mcg desogestrel) followed HRA's EllaOne (30mg ulipristal acetate) emergency contraceptive into nonprescription, pharmacy-only sales in the UK, which the firm's CEO, David Wright, noted in an HBW Insight interview. (Also see "[HRA Raising Game To Promote UK OTC Daily Contraceptive, Hopes US Switch Will Follow](#)" - HBW Insight, 24 Aug, 2021.)

"HRA has over 10 years' experience in women's health in the UK and also markets the leading brand of emergency contraceptive in pharmacy. HRA has been promoting women's health products and providing access directly to consumers in Europe since 1999, as well as investing millions every year doing so," Wright said in 2021.

"We place the consumer at the center of all our brands marketing campaigns and believe we deeply understand the OTC desogestrel shopper. Everything, from our pharmacy training, packaging, advertising and social media campaigns to our merchandising materials, reflect a

"While we were the league's first beauty partner, we're thrilled to see athletes take up more space in beauty. Glossier and the WNBA share a similar spirit, aiming to disrupt the status quo and fueled by a shared passion for what we believe in," Leahy added.

Since 2020, Glossier has spotlighted a number of the league's athletes in national promotions and campaigns. The partnership also includes courtside signage, content collaboration, giving products to players and influencer events at games.

"This collaboration between powerful brands demonstrates that visibility and empowerment matter, and that there has never been a better time to support the multidimensional athletes of the WNBA," said league Commissioner Cathy Engelbert.

Glossier, recently reported in industry media as considering an initial public offering of shares and having total 2023 sales of around \$275m, received \$80m funding in 2021 which it targeted for scaling its online business internationally and reopening its owned retail channel. (Also see "[Glossier Announces \\$80m Financing: 'This Is The Future We've Always Been Building For'](#)" - HBW Insight, 8 Jul, 2021.)

consistent message to our target audience – in which the consumer, not the switch, is at the heart of it.”

Perrigo, which also markets Rx contraceptives in the US and other countries through HRA subsidiary, noted during its most recent earnings briefing in February that the UK business “provides the framework for a repeatable growth model.”

Paris-based HRA won HBW Insight’s 2021 OTC Launch of the Year award for its engaging trade advertising, comprehensive pharmacy training program, and excellent consumer campaign for Hana. (Also see "[Bayer Crowned Company Of The Year At OTC Marketing Awards 2021](#)" - HBW Insight, 2 Dec, 2021.)

A second OTC desogestrel product also was approved in the UK at the same time, Maxwellia Ltd.’s Lovima. Maxwellia won the Best OTC Public Relations Campaign for a Consumer Healthcare Product award in 2021 for its work to open up the conversation on women’s health.

Both firms also developed pharmacy training programs to support pharmacists in ensuring their product was appropriate for the consumer.

Outlook Better For Long-Term

Opill’s long-term sales outlook is promising, but Perrigo made clear since the drug’s US approval in that it would be dilutive to earnings in 2024 due investments in the brand, primarily at retailers and online in the second quarter.

The firm expects around half of initial uptake from consumers moving from Rx oral contraceptives and for later sales not as high but still strong.

Its 2024 results, even with its first-in-category OT switch available, also will be slowed by investment in a companywide overhaul including staff reductions and organizational streamlining. An additional drag is continued rehabilitations to its infant formula manufacturing operations. It expects “full infant formula recovery for fiscal year 2025.” (Also see "[Perrigo Delivering Opill Sales Within A Month, Launches ‘Energize’ Efficiency Project Immediately](#)" - HBW

WNBA Toasts Another Partnership

The WNBA also recently announced its first official winery partnership in a multi-year pact with La Crema, part of Jackson Family Wines’ global portfolio. La Crema also becomes the official wine partner for USA Basketball Women’s National Team.

La Crema says it has cultivated the luxury wine experience, producing sustainably at scale from the world’s best growing regions. It will showcase its work at the 2024 WNBA All

Insight, 27 Feb, 2024.)

It reported 2023 fourth-quarter net sales flat, up 0.1% at \$1.2bn, with gains from currency exchange and acquisitions offset by discontinued products. Full-year net sales grew 4.6% to \$4.7bn, reflecting gains from its acquisitions in 2022 of HRA and an infant formula brand and production facility from Nestle SA offset by discontinued products.

Star Weekend and offer exclusive WNBA “Experiences” providing fans unique opportunities at marquee events.

Access Hailed, Affordability Questioned

Perrigo announced its suggested retail prices for Opill when it began shipping the product to retailers in early March. It said it’s seeking to ensure affordability and availability of Opill in stores and online and would offer cost-assistance program to qualified low-income, uninsured women. (Also see [“Perrigo Ships Opill To Stores, But Contraceptive Access Advocates Say It Doesn’t Deliver On Price”](#) - HBW Insight, 5 Mar, 2024.)

Opill is offered through retailers at suggested retail prices of \$19.99 for a one-month pack and \$49.99 for a three-month pack. The formulation’s available on the brand’s website at \$49.99 for a three-month supply and \$89.99 for a six-month supply.

However, advocates for wider access to oral contraceptives, including members of Congress, suggest the prices should be lower. Research nonprofit Ibis Reproductive Health, which worked with HRA on OTC switch studies for Opill and which operates the Free the Pill advocacy group, says Perrigo isn’t meeting its affordability goal.

Ibis says research and polling show half of adult and teen respondents interested in using OTC birth control pills would be able to pay no more than \$10 per month.

Opill purchases may also be eligible for payment with flexible spending, health savings or similar pre-tax accounts.