

Extended Abstract

Prevalence, attitudes and knowledge of misoprostol for self-induction of abortion in women presenting for abortion at Midwestern reproductive health

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Objective

Expansive restrictions to legal abortion have led to reports of self-induced termination of undesired pregnancies with misoprostol obtained without a prescription or provider. This study seeks to describe the prevalence of women seeking or employing misoprostol for self-induced abortion and how they access information.

Study Design

Cross sectional investigation of women immediately following their abortion at three reproductive health clinics in the Midwestern United States. An

anonymous survey queried gestational age, barriers, online investigation about self-induction and opinions concerning availability of medical abortion.

Results

From June-September 2016, 276 women participated out of 437 presenting to the clinics during the study period. One hundred ninety-one (74.6%) women investigated abortion options online, and of those, 58 (30.9%) participants investigated misoprostol self-sourced online for home use. Women who investigated online were less likely to have had a prior abortion than those who did not investigate

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online (29.3% vs 63.1%, $p<0.01$). They were also more likely to report prior home attempts to end this pregnancy (8.6% vs 0%, $p=0.05$). Overall, four (1.6%) of the respondents purchased misoprostol and three (1.2%) used it.

Conclusion

A majority of women seeking an abortion sought online information prior to their appointment, and a third of those investigated misoprostol for home use.

Implications

Women are accessing information regarding misoprostol for self-induction of abortion on the internet and as barriers to legal abortion increase, women may be more likely to self-induce abortion.

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