Self-Induction Abortion in the USA

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Disclosures

Nothing to Disclose
Learning Objectives

Participants will:

- Summarize how women obtain misoprostol and mifepristone outside of clinics
- Be able to describe what is known about prevalence of self-induction in the USA
- Describe the safety and acceptability of self-use of misoprostol
- Integrate different perspectives on the issue of self-induction
Definition

Self induction with:

Mifepristone plus misoprostol or Misoprostol alone

NOT:

X Herbs
X Massage
X Blows to the uterus
X Insertion of objects through the cervix
What Do We Know About Women Self-Inducing in the USA?

- How prevalent is self-induction?
- Why are women self-inducing?
- How safe is self-induction?
- How do women get the medicines?
Idaho woman charged after fetus found in box

Massachusetts -- Prosecutors charged an 18-year-old woman today with ingesting ulcer medication in a botched attempt to abort her second-term pregnancy.

Michigan – August 2014
Investigators also say she bought and consumed drugs from Hong Kong to force her body to have an abortion.

Woman hit with rare charge of SELF-ABORTION after dead fetus is found in trash
Only fourth woman in New York to face charge in the last 30 years
How Many U.S. Women Are Self-Inducing?

Jennie M., Idaho

Ambar A., Massachusetts


Why Might Women be Self-Inducing?

• **Access Issues**
  - Geography
  - Cost

• **Misinformation about Abortion**
  - Legal Status
  - Fear of “surgery”
  - Don’t know that abortion funds can help

• **Privacy/Preference**
In 2000, 31% of women of reproductive age lived in one of the 13 states considered hostile to abortion...

...but, by 2013 56% of women lived in one of the now 27 hostile states.
Decline in Number of Clinics

Percentage change in clinics from 2010-2013

-20.1% and below
-10.1–20%
-0.1–10%
No change
+0.1–10%
+10.1–20%
20.1% and above
No data available
Where do Women Get Misoprostol?

- Pharmacies in Mexico
- Friends/relatives via the mail
- Bodegas/Flea Markets
- Internet
Google search – Key Words

- Where do I buy abortion pills?
- Mifepristone
- Abortion Pill
- Misoprostol, cytotec
Abortion Pill Online

Medical Non-Surgical Abortion
Buy Mifepristone, Mifepryne, RU 486 online

Mail Order - Worldwide Delivery

We accept Credit Cards and eCheck
Are there safety issues?

Are there acceptability issues?
Is Self-induction with Misoprostol Safe?

Compared to penicillin?

Compared to other methods of ending an unwanted pregnancy outside of a clinic?

Compared to carrying to term and giving birth?
Acceptability
(group of 2589 women)
Challenges

- An underground service makes women vulnerable to scams and fake medicines.
- Women may not have the information they need to use the medicines in the safest and most effective way.
- Hostile climate brings increased risk of scrutiny and prosecution.
- Self-induction after the first trimester has higher risks (but still safer than other methods of trying to end an unwanted pregnancy).
What Do We *Think* About Women Self-Inducing in the USA?
Restriction after restriction has severely restricted access to services in clinics for many women
The Global Reality

Misoprostol for self-induction is a major factor in reducing maternal mortality


The U.S. Reality
Misoprostol for self-induction in the USA is not new


Article 27

Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits.
How could/should we respond to the issue of self-induction?
Misoprostol Alone

80-85% effective (up to 12 weeks)

WHO Protocol: Total 12 pills of 200 mcg each

4 pills under the tongue for 30 minutes
– wait 3 hours – 4 pills – wait 3 hours – 4 pills
A Pill Available in Mexico Is a Texas Option for Abortion

Pharmacies in Nuevo Progreso, Mexico, just across the Texas border, sell an abortion pill without a prescription. More

Photos >
By ERIK ECKHOLM
Published: July 13, 2013
An Opportunity to Change/Expand Services
Women have always found ways to try to end an unwanted pregnancy.

How can we support women who self-induce?
Thank you!