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THURSDAY, 21 SEPTEMBER 2017



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Home Care News England

Thursday, 21 September 2017

MORE WOMEN BUYING ABORTION PILLS ONLINE DUE TO BARRIERS ACCESSING CARE

Written by Jane Kirby

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British women are seeking abortion pills online due to barriers accessing care, research suggests.

A new study in the journal Contraception found some women in England, Scotland and Wales are shunning traditional routes such as the NHS in favour of seeking help online.

Experts found that 519 women contacted Women on Web between November last year and March this year.

All were living in Wales, Scotland and England, where abortion is legal.

The anonymised emails of 180 women were analysed, who gave 209 reasons for seeking an abortion via online services.



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Among all the reasons, 49% listed barriers to getting an abortion the conventional way, including long waiting times, distance to clinic, work or childcare commitments, lack of eligibility for free NHS services and prior negative experiences of abortion care.

Some 30% were privacy concerns, including lack of confidentiality of services, perceived or experienced stigma and preferring the privacy and comfort of using pills at home.

Almost one in five (18%) were where the woman felt controlled by a violent partner or her family.

The study, which included experts from the University of Edinburgh and the Netherlands, concluded: "Despite the presence of abortion services in Great Britain, a diverse group of women still experiences logistical and personal barriers to accessing care through the formal healthcare system, or prefer the privacy of conducting their abortions in their own homes."

"The presence of multiple barriers to accessing abortion care in Great Britain highlights the need for future guidelines to recommend a more woman-centred approach to service provision.

"Reducing the number of clinic visits and designing services to meet the needs of those living in controlling circumstances are particularly important goals."

A spokeswoman for the British Pregnancy Advisory Service (BPAS), which provides abortions, said: "This important study gives unprecedented insight into the numbers of women now turning online to access abortion services and their reasons for doing so.

"The study illustrates that even in Great Britain, where abortion is lawful and funded, there will be many women who are unable to access services.

"The fact that the current interpretation of our laws prevents women from using the medication for early medical abortion at home, once lawfully prescribed by a doctor to a woman who meets the terms of the Abortion Act, is clearly creating significant obstacles to care.

"It means women must sometimes attend multiple appointments - a huge challenge for women with work and childcare responsibilities, or without transport."

The spokeswoman said Women on Web does not supply women in Britain with abortion pills, but abortion medication is widely available online.

Clare Murphy, director of external affairs at BPAS, added: "The numbers of women in Britain seeking abortion pills online documented in this study are quite staggering, particularly given that it covers just one service over a four-month period.

"It really underlines the need for a thorough overhaul of our abortion laws so that no woman faces clinically unnecessary obstacles in accessing care.

"It also concerns us deeply that women using pills bought online are at risk of life in prison if caught."

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