

Research finds 95% success from abortion pills bought online

British Medical Journal publishes findings suggesting abortion pills are safe alternative

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Abortion pills bought online can be a safe “alternative” to travelling for abortion or unsafe abortion, research published in the *British Medical Journal* finds.

The study, based on self-reported outcome data from 1,000 women in the Republic and Northern Ireland, finds 95 per cent of those who obtained abortion pills online successfully terminated their pregnancies.

Just under 10 per cent sought medical attention.

Abortion pills are effective in terminating a pregnancy up to 10 weeks’ gestation.

Researchers at the University of Texas in Austin, with Rebecca Gomperts, founder of international collective Women on Web (WoW), analysed data provided by women who had bought medical abortion pills through the WoW website between January 2010 and December 31st, 2012.

The abortion pills, mifepristone and misoprostol, were sent to 1,636 women on the island of Ireland during the two years

Follow-up information

Follow-up information was obtained from 1,158. Of these, 1,023 confirmed they had taken the pills, and follow-up information was provided by 1,000 of these.

A total of 542 of the women were in their 30s, 270 were in their 20s and 184 were 40 or older. Four were under 20.

Some 781 were under seven weeks pregnant and 219 were between seven and nine weeks pregnant.

“Overall, 94.7 per cent reported successfully ending their pregnancy without surgical intervention. Seven women (0.7 per cent) reported receiving a blood transfusion and 26 (2.6 per cent) reported receiving antibiotics. No deaths . . . were reported by family, friends, the authorities or the media.”

Ninety-three reported experiencing symptoms for which they were advised to seek medical attention, of whom 87 did seek attention. Of the five who did not report, none reported any adverse outcome.

The purchase and importation of abortion medication is illegal in both the Republic and Northern Ireland. Under the Protection of Life During Pregnancy Act 2013, anyone found to have taken such medication could face prosecution and a fine or up to 14 years in prison.

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No known prosecutions

There have been no known prosecutions under the Act, and the Health Products Regulatory Authority has said it would not prosecute a woman who had illegally imported abortion medication for personal use.

Though the number of pills being seized by Customs, in the past, has fallen, it is understood abortion pills are being made available through alternative means.



In the North, the PSNI is actively raiding abortion activists' homes and offices searching for abortion pills, and a number of women have been prosecuted for taking the pills or procuring them for other women.

This report's authors say the study shows "self-sourced medical abortion using online telemedicine can be highly effective and outcomes compare favourably with in-clinic protocols.

"Reported rates of adverse events are low. Women are able to self-identify the symptoms of potentially serious complications and most report seeking medical attention when advised. Results have important implications for women worldwide living in areas where access to abortion is restricted."

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