



Medication Abortion

Brief 3: Education and training

Highlights

- Ibis provides information about medication abortion to diverse audiences through the website www.medicationabortion.com, regional meetings, and provider education.
- Ibis's research on the abortion content of health professions education and training in the Middle East and the United States supports collaborative efforts to ensure that providers are equipped with the knowledge and skills they need to provide high-quality medication abortion services.

Ibis Reproductive Health aims to improve access to medication abortion for women around the world. Using clinical and social science research, we test ways to make protocols and regimens—including both mifepristone and misoprostol and misoprostol-alone options—more user friendly; explore ways to improve access to medication abortion services and service delivery; and examine global policy related to medication abortion. We also strive to improve access to medication abortion by providing medically accurate information about this service to diverse audiences. We work in many different contexts, including where abortion is legal and where it is restricted, low-resource settings, and places where rates of unsafe abortion are high.

Online information about medication abortion

In collaboration with the Office of Population Research at Princeton University, we developed a multi-lingual website dedicated to information about medication abortion: www.medicationabortion.com. The English, French, and Arabic versions were launched in September 2003 and the Spanish version followed in September 2004. The website provides medically accurate information about the mifepristone and misoprostol, methotrexate and misoprostol, and misoprostol-alone regimens for both providers and women considering the option of medication abortion. In the year following the launch of all four language versions, the website received nearly 80,000 visits, and now receives over 400,000 visits per year. In 2009, the website was visited by users in 208 countries and territories. We continue to monitor use patterns and regularly update website content. See *Providing medication abortion information to diverse communities: Use patterns of a multi-lingual website* by Foster et al. 2006 for more information.

www.medicationabortion.com is one part of a larger effort to expand information about medication abortion to providers in the Middle East and North Africa. Working with native Arabic speakers from several dialects to ensure linguistic accessibility, we have created and distributed a number of health education and training materials. (See “Educational materials” for links to these resources).

Where we work

Ibis works in a number of countries in diverse contexts, including in Latin America and the Caribbean, the Middle East and North Africa, sub-Saharan Africa, and the United States. In this brief, we feature work done in all of these regions.



Regional meetings and conferences

Another way that Ibis shares information about medication abortion is by contributing to regional meetings and conferences; several examples of these meetings follow.

Middle East and North Africa regional conference on medication abortion

In collaboration with the Centre de Formation aux Techniques de la Santé Reproductive, Gynuity Health Projects, and the Office National de la Famille et de la Population, we co-organized a conference dedicated to medication abortion in the francophone Arab world entitled “The prevention of unsafe abortion: The potential role of medication abortion methods.” The three-day conference was held in Tunis in May 2006 and included more than 35 clinicians and researchers from Algeria, Lebanon, Mauritania, Morocco, and Tunisia. The conference provided detailed information about the clinical provision of medication abortion services, showcased the Tunisian experience of integrating medication

abortion into the national family planning program, and facilitated the development of country-specific strategic planning sessions dedicated to reducing unsafe abortion in the region.

International Federation of Gynecology and Obstetrics (FIGO) unsafe abortion initiative

Ibis participates as a cooperating institution in the FIGO initiative entitled “Reducing the Burden of Unsafe Abortion.” In 2009, representatives from Ibis attended this initiative’s South American and Eastern-Central-South African regional workshops. Representatives from Ministries of Health and national ob/gyn societies presented action plans for reducing maternal morbidity and mortality associated with unsafe abortion in their countries and representatives from Ibis and other non-governmental organizations provided general feedback and presented on their work in order to foster collaborations. Ibis representatives highlighted the role that access to medication abortion can play in reducing morbidity and mortality related to unsafe abortion and presented on our work in this area.

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Latin American physician and advocacy groups

Ibis also has supported regional meetings of the Federación Latinoamericana de Sociedades de Obstetricia y Ginecología Committee on Women's Sexual and Reproductive Rights and the Consorcio Latinoamericano Contra el Aborto Inseguro (CLACAI) and has been a member of the CLACAI coordinating committee since it was first formed in 2005. Ibis representatives regularly present information on medication abortion at these groups' gatherings and have conducted various research projects with CLACAI partners.

Research on the abortion content of health professions education and training

Health professions education and training in the Middle East and North Africa

Ensuring that health care professionals are equipped with the knowledge and skills they need to be able to provide a range of high-quality reproductive health services, including medication abortion, is key to improving women's reproductive health in the Middle East and North Africa. In Palestine, we are working with colleagues at the Faculty of Nursing at Bethlehem University to improve the reproductive health content of nursing education. Our national survey of nurse educators and final-year nursing students has allowed us to identify priority areas for reproductive health curriculum reform, including emerging technologies such as medication abortion, and we are currently working with local nursing faculty to address these priority areas. We have recently launched a similar study in Jordan on the reproductive health content of medical education.

Health professions education and training in the United States

The number of abortion providers in the US has decreased significantly since the 1980s and many women in the US live in a county without an abortion provider. Expanding the pool of abortion providers by increasing the number of trained advanced practice clinicians (APCs) and nurses able to provide

abortion services has the potential to greatly increase women's access to quality reproductive health services. In collaboration with the Abortion Access Project and the National Abortion Federation, we completed a national study to determine the extent of abortion training in nurse practitioner, physician assistant, and certified nurse-midwifery programs in the US. Of the programs that responded to our survey, 53% reported that their programs provide didactic instruction on surgical, manual vacuum aspiration, or medication abortion; only 21% reported including at least one of these three procedures in their routine clinical curricula. Our findings reveal that APC programs' didactic and clinical education on abortion services are deficient; we recommend efforts to integrate abortion into routine APC training in order to give more women access to safe abortion care. We also conducted a similar study examining the reproductive health content of nursing education in Massachusetts and plan to use these results to inform efforts to improve nursing education and training in the state. See the articles *From the outside in: A unique model for stimulating curricula reform in nursing education* by Simmonds et al. 2009 and *Abortion education in nurse practitioner, physician assistant, and certified nurse-midwifery programs: A national survey* by Foster et al. 2006 for more information.

Education in conflict settings

The 60-year civil conflict in Burma and the consequent population dislocation, disruption of services, and shortage of trained health service personnel has significantly affected reproductive health. The risk of unintended pregnancy among women in Eastern Burma and Burmese refugees and migrants in Thailand is considerable, abortion services are severely restricted, and unsafe abortion is a significant contributor to maternal morbidity and mortality. We are conducting a pilot project which aims to provide health workers and medics with medically accurate information about the use of misoprostol for the prevention of postpartum hemorrhage, management of incomplete abortion, and induction of early abortion. Over a two-year period,

we conducted trainings for approximately 150 health workers and representatives from more than 15 community organizations along the Thai-Burma border. As part of this project we also developed low-literacy and higher-literacy materials dedicated to misoprostol in both Burmese and Karen. Evaluation of the pilot project demonstrates that there is considerable need for additional efforts to expand information and training about medication abortion methods.

Educational materials:

- Medication abortion website: www.medicationabortion.com (Available in English, Arabic, French, and Spanish)
- Medication abortion – A guide for health professionals (PDF): Arabic (www.ibisreproductivehealth.org/downloads/Medication_abortion_A_guide_for_health_professionals_Arabic.pdf) or English (www.ibisreproductivehealth.org/downloads/Medication_abortion_A_guide_for_health_professionals_English.pdf)
- Medication abortion – A training module for health professionals (PowerPoint): Arabic (www.ibisreproductivehealth.org/downloads/Medication_Abortion_Training_Module_Arabic.ppt) or English (www.ibisreproductivehealth.org/downloads/Medication_Abortion_Training_Module.ppt)

Research articles:

- **Foster A, Polis C, Allee MK, Simmonds K, Zurek M, Brown A.** Abortion education in nurse practitioner, physician assistant, and certified nurse-midwifery programs: A national survey. *Contraception*. April 2006;73:408-14.
- **Foster A, Wynn L, Rouhana A, Diaz-Olavarrieta C, Schaffer K, Trussell J.** Providing medication abortion information to diverse communities: Use patterns of a multi-lingual website. *Contraception*. September 2006;74:264-71.
- **Simmonds K, Foster AM, Zurek M.** From the outside in: A unique model for stimulating curricula reform in nursing education. *Journal of Nursing Education*. March 2009;48(10):583-7.

Other briefs in this series:

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Brief 2: Strategies for improving service delivery and access to services



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Ibis Reproductive Health aims to improve women's reproductive autonomy, choices, and health worldwide.

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