Global Abortion Overview

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Reasons Women Seek Abortion

• Globally estimated that 40% of pregnancies are unplanned
  – Non-use of contraception
  – Ineffective contraceptive use
  – Method failure
• 215 million worldwide are estimated to have an unmet need for contraception
• Sexual violence
• Financial reasons, life plans, other children
Unsafe Abortion

• WHO definition
  – A procedure for terminating an unintended pregnancy carried out either by persons lacking the necessary skills or in an environment that does not conform to minimal medical standards, or both.

• Approximately 20 million unsafe abortions annually, resulting in 44,000 deaths

• 15% of maternal deaths in 2013
Mortality by Gestational Age
Russian Federation, 1999

All abortions

6.6%

Abortion deaths

76%

1st trimester
2nd trimester

Zhirova, et al., SFP 2004
Mortality by Gestational Age
Benin City, Nigeria, 1973-84

All abortions
- 10%

Abortion deaths
- 59%
- 1st trimester
- 2nd trimester

Unuigbe, et al., IJGO 1988
How do women obtain abortion care in restricted settings?

- Stigma may make it difficult to obtain accurate information
- Perception of surgical abortion as being unsafe—and therefore medical abortion as safer
- Providers may have limited training and rely on outdated methods, such as sharp curettage
Misoprostol

- Prostaglandin analogue
- Causes uterine contractions and opening of the cervix
- Causes vaginal bleeding (incomplete abortion)
- When used vaginally in repeated doses, approximately 85% effective in causing complete abortion
Misoprostol as Safer Method to Self-induce Abortion

• In Brazil complications noted to be less common with reporting use of misoprostol compared to other invasive methods
• In several countries in Latin America, abortion-related mortality has declined as use of misoprostol has become more prevalent
Estimated Reduction in Global Abortion-related Mortality with Misoprostol

Harper, et al., IJGO 2007
How are women accessing misoprostol?

• Pharmacies
• Informal sector
• From clinicians

➔ Efforts among women to disseminate information about evidence-based use
Efforts to Address Unsafe Abortion

- Post-abortion care services
- Training on the use of manual vacuum aspiration
- Revision of restrictive laws
- Provision of services within the limits of the law
- Harm-reduction models