

KNOWLEDGE AND PRACTICES AMONG MEDICAL ABORTION SEEKERS IN SOUTHEASTERN NIGERIA

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Abstract. Nigeria has restrictive abortion laws; unsafe abortion and its complications are major public health challenges. Access to reproductive health services in Nigeria, including medical abortion, is poor. We determined the socio-demographic characteristics, patterns of abortion practices, and experiences of medical abortions among abortion seekers in southeastern Nigeria. We carried out a descriptive, cross sectional survey of 100 consecutive medical abortion seekers in southeastern Nigeria. Subjects had a mean age of 23.5+4.4 years. Fifty-five percent of respondents were students. Sixty-four percent had a secondary educational level, 33% had a tertiary education level and 3% had a primary educational level. Fifty-eight percent of subjects were ages 18-20 years at coitarche; 25% had one or more previous deliveries and 49% had a previous termination of pregnancy. Forty-eight percent had used drugs for pregnancy terminations. Drugs used for termination included quinine combined with other drugs in 8%; gynaecoid alone in 6%, gynaecoid combined with other drugs in 6% menstrogen combined with other drugs in 6% and an unclassified drug in 14%. Thirty-three percent of subjects purchased their abortion drugs in a pharmacy. Three percent, 2%, and 0% of subjects had a knowledge of misoprostol, mifepristone and methotrexate, respectively. One percent of respondents had used misoprostol. We detected serious information gaps regarding abortion and poor access to reproductive health services. There is a need for policies and program to bridge this gap, and a need for revision of the present Nigerian abortion law.

Keywords: abortion practices, experience on medication abortion, termination of pregnancy seekers, Nigeria

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