

Induced abortion in sub-Saharan Africa

Rogo, Khama O

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Abstract:

Unsafe abortions and their complications are a major cause of maternal mortality. Hospital based studies from most African countries confirm that up to 50% of maternal deaths are due to abortion. This paper reviews problem of induced abortion in sub-Saharan Africa. Issues of prevalence and prevention are addressed while acknowledging the need to review the legal regimes operating in these countries. PIP: There is confirmation from hospital-based studies that unsafe abortion and complications have been the cause of up to 50% of maternal deaths in sub Saharan Africa. In this article, estimates of induced abortion are discussed as well as abortion law and abortion services from an African perspective. Future prospects for resolving the abortion issues are hampered by fear and restrictions. Recommended strategies for decreasing he undesirable outcomes of botched abortions were 1) improvement in the availability of good health care including drugs and referrals, 2) improvement in accessibility of contraceptive services and involvement of males in decision making, 3) introduction of appropriate and simple technology for performing safe abortions, 4) increases in access to affordable abortion services, and 5) active education and involvement of local women's groups regarding fertility reproduction and abortion. The development of an effective abortion program is dependent on a reliable health service infrastructure, which includes lamps, examination tables, and sterilization equipment. The WHO has recommended vacuum aspiration for uterine evacuation and induction of abortion or treatment of complications at the first referral level. The current availability of this equipment is limited. Also recommended is the training of medical and nonmedical personnel in the use of Karman's syringe and cannula. Consideration should be given to provision of abortion services at local health centers and dispensaries rather than in big hospitals. Constructive dialogue with lawmakers is also important for easing restrictions. Abortion must be a part of reproductive health agendas. The extent of unwanted pregnancy is apparent from news articles about abandoned newborns in schools, or deaths of honor students in rural areas who learned in class about health for all, but were unable to experience it in real terms.