

Abortion Services In Aotearoa New Zealand: The Voices Of Women On Improving Access.

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Background:

In March 2020, Aotearoa New Zealand (NZ) decriminalised abortion, taking it out of the Crimes Act and placing it within the jurisdiction of health under the Abortion Legislation Act 2020, ensuring that abortion is considered a health-related activity. Consequently, we expected access to improve as barriers were removed. However, recent data suggest that access is still not equitable. The experiences of women accessing abortion across NZ are not known. This study aimed to investigate experiences of accessing abortion services since abortion law reform, and views on how to improve access and experience.

Methods:

This mixed methods study uses an anonymous, cross-sectional, online questionnaire and qualitative interviews. The study is conducted in abortion services nationwide (including regions with high deprivation, large rural populations, and large urban populations). Inclusion criteria: anyone having an abortion from 14 years of age. A sample size of 100-200 is sought. Differences across demographic characteristics are investigated (e.g. ethnicity, age, and rurality). Participants can complete the questionnaire, take part in an interview, or both. Interviews with Māori are led and undertaken by Māori researchers using a Kaupapa Māori methodology. This locates the research in Māori worldviews, placing Māori at the centre, exploring the system and service issues that affect access to, and experiences of abortion services. Survey data collection commenced January 2023 and will end by July 2023.

Results:

Survey findings will be presented (n=90 response to date). Topics include information and support, physical access, telehealth options, in-person options, pregnancy/abortion options, tests, counselling, cultural safety, and post-abortion care. All members of the multidisciplinary research team participate in data interpretation to enable a rich understanding.

Conclusion:

Findings will inform how to design and deliver acceptable, and person-centred abortion services and inform the NZ Government on improving provision of equitable, safe, and accessible abortion services.

Disclosure of Interest Statement:

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