

Early Medical Abortion provision at a publicly funded sexual health service – a feasible model of care for priority populations

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Background / Purpose:

Despite the decriminalisation of abortion in New South Wales in 2019, stigma and financial barriers continue to limit access to care. In response, Kirketon Road Centre (KRC) established an innovative, nurse-led early medical abortion (EMA) clinic within its existing publicly funded sexual health service (PFSHS). The clinic offers low-cost EMA to priority populations. Nurses with specific training manage the service from triage to follow-up, supported by doctors and counsellors.

Approach:

We conducted a clinical audit of the EMA clinic from January 2022 to December 2024.

Outcomes / Impact:

A total of 139 unique clients accessed the EMA clinic, with four clients attending twice and two attending three times. The majority (42%) were aged 20–25 years, and two-thirds were born overseas. Priority populations included Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people (22%), sex workers (16%), individuals experiencing homelessness (9%), people who inject drugs (6%), those facing financial hardship (31%), and people without Medicare (35%). Over half (58%) belonged to two or more priority groups.

Across 146 episodes of care, 88 clients (60%) accessed EMA at KRC, 29 (21%) were referred for surgical abortion, and 18 (12%) did not require an abortion (e.g. not pregnant, miscarriage, or chose to continue the pregnancy). A small proportion (8%) were lost to follow-up or referred elsewhere.

All EMA clients were followed up three days post-treatment. Ninety-two percent had at least one additional follow-up between 7–21 days, with 70% completing two follow-ups. All clients were counselled on contraception, and 32 (36%) accessed contraception through KRC.

Innovation and Significance:

Integrating EMA services within a PFSHS is both feasible and effective in reaching priority populations. Trained nurses can oversee this care and support women to make informed choices, with medical support as required.

Disclosure of Interest Statement

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