

No Touch Medical Abortion: Implementation by Latrobe Sexual and Reproductive Health Hub

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Background/Purpose:

A “no touch” early medical abortion protocol was implemented at a high-volume community health service in Gippsland, Victoria. Although such protocols are established internationally, Australian clinicians have been more cautious. Dr Paul Brougham and RN Cath Bateman identified the need for a less invasive, more efficient process after managing hundreds of uncomplicated medical abortions using bedside ultrasound.

Approach:

The team adopted the Royal Women’s Hospital’s *Abortion Medical Management to 9 Weeks* guideline, which advises ultrasound only when clinical dating is uncertain, there are symptoms suggestive of ectopic pregnancy, or relevant clinical history. They continued using in-clinic bedside ultrasound for pregnancies over 7 weeks. An innovative risk assessment tool was used to determine if ultrasound and pathology could be safely omitted. Nurses played a key role in patient education and ensuring informed consent.

Outcomes/Impact:

Since implementation, 421 unplanned pregnancies were managed, with 325 MS2Step prescriptions. Of these, 108 (33.2%) were prescribed without ultrasound and 18 (5.5%) without routine pathology—though since ceasing routine pathology in February 2025, 50% of prescriptions have proceeded without it. No increase in complications or unplanned clinical encounters has been recorded. Outcomes for patients under 6 weeks’ gestation were consistent with broader data, and complication rates were significantly higher in patients over 8 weeks—three times greater than those under 7 weeks.

Innovation and Significance:

This model challenges ongoing hesitancy among Australian clinicians. The Latrobe team’s data supports the safety and efficacy of no touch protocols and highlights potential improvements in patient access and experience. Routine ultrasounds can be costly and delay care; minimising their use may enhance timely access to early medical abortion.

Disclosure of Interest Statement:

No disclosures