

Online abortion and contraception provider map facilitates abortion access, provision, and advocacy

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Background:

Children by Choice launched an online interactive map of abortion and contraception providers in October 2021. Previous research identifies anticipated stigma and discrimination, increased workload, and concerns about becoming known as ‘the abortion doctor’, especially in regional areas, as factors preventing both abortion provision and providers’ willingness to promote their services. An evaluation was undertaken to assess the impacts of the map on registered providers regarding their practice and patients, workload, income, and anticipation and experiences of stigma.

Methods:

A longitudinal evaluation involving a quantitative online survey of providers listed on the map was undertaken at two timepoints, 6 and 18 months after the map was launched. Statistical analyses were undertaken to compare and track the impacts over time, stratified by provider characteristics. The study received ethical approval from the Griffith University HREC.

Results:

Most respondents were General Practitioners providing early medication termination of pregnancy and contraceptive services. While fear of stigma was relatively common among regional providers regarding increasing the public visibility of their SRH services, minimal experiences of stigma or harassment were reported. The evaluation also identified changes in demand, income, and community support over time.

Conclusion:

As research finds more broadly, anticipation of stigma and harassment was more common than enacted (experienced) stigma. Increasing public visibility of SRH providers had primarily positive outcomes, including regarding community support, providers’ reputations, and service accessibility. The evaluation underscores the valued role and safety of online directories in removing barriers to abortion and contraception care. A national map is needed to further minimise barriers to access, encourage provision and promotion of services, reduce the likelihood of stigmatising healthcare experiences for abortion seekers, and provide data for evidence-based advocacy around systemic inequities.

Disclosure of Interest Statement: