Self-Managed Termination of Pregnancy via Telemedicine: Making safe abortion services available during the Covid-19 Pandemic

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Our Context

60% Pregnancies unintended
30% Unwanted (Stats SA 2013)

1.8% Abortion rate \( \frac{1000 \times \text{WRA}}{100} \)

20% Second trimester abortions (Harries et al. 2013)

52 – 58% Unsafe abortions (Guttmacher Institute 2014 and WHO 2015)

Designated facilities providing SA
(Amnesty International 2017)
The South African Law on Termination of Pregnancy via Telemedicine

1. Abortion is legal up to the 12th week of pregnancy on request
2. Abortion is legal up to the 20th week of pregnancy for health or socio-economic reasons
3. Women are eligible for medical abortion if they are under 9 weeks pregnant
4. The Choice on Termination of Pregnancy Act makes no mention of the provision of termination of pregnancy services via telemedicine

But the Health Professionals Council of South Africa released guidelines for good practice in Telemedicine which include:

1. Healthcare practitioners providing an ethical and professional service at all times
2. Consulting and servicing healthcare practitioners must be registered with the HPCSA
3. Formal (preferably written) must always be secured from the patient;
4. Confidentiality for the patient and all information generated during procedures must always be respected
Marie Stopes introduced the Telemedicine Service Channel in April 2020.

Initially calls would be transferred to available nurses in our clinics across the country but we now have Telemedicine Hubs in Cape Town and Sandton which have dedicated Telehealth medical professionals and administrators.
ELIGIBILITY SCREENING

Women who are 4-9 weeks into their pregnancy, do not suffer from any pre-existing medical conditions and who want to legally terminate qualify for this procedure.

CONTRAINDICATIONS

➢ Women who are not willing to have a surgical procedure if the pill is not effective.
➢ Women who are not able to understand the procedure or how to follow the directions.
➢ Women who have heart, kidney, or liver problems.
➢ Women who currently have an IUD (though you can take the pill upon its removal).
➢ Women with bleeding disorders, or those who are taking anticlotting medications.
What is in the pack?

1. Mifepristone
2. Misoprostol
3. Instruction Booklet
4. Aftercare Booklet
5. Pain Killers
6. Pregnancy Test
## SERVICES PROVIDED

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>APRIL</th>
<th>MAY</th>
<th>JUNE</th>
<th>JULY (till 24 July)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>ASSESSMENTS CONDUCTED</strong></td>
<td>84</td>
<td>235</td>
<td>361</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>COMPLETED SELF MANAGED ABORTIONS</strong></td>
<td>44</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>290</td>
<td>521</td>
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</table>
MARKETING TACTICS

• DIGITAL MARKETING
• OUTDOOR MEDIA
• EMAIL MARKETING
• MEDIA
• MARIE STOPES CONTACT CENTRE

www.mariestopes.org.za

Marie Stopes SA Introduces Its New, Self-Managed, Safe Pregnancy Termination Service By Telemedicine

Call the TOLL FREE line 0800 11 77 85 to arrange a phone consultation.
CHALLENGES

1. Preference for Face to Face services in the first few weeks
2. Clients changing their minds after receiving their packs
3. Logistical Delayed delivery of packs
4. Written informed consent is not always easy to receive
5. Some clients not knowing their gestation/date of last period
6. Illegal provider imitation
ADVANTAGES

1. Wider Reach
2. Less expensive - no infrastructure or travel costs
3. Efficient - no queuing
4. Confidentiality
THANKS FOR JOINING