

Part of the Abortion Complications (/socialissues/life-issues/abortion-complications) Series

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2. [Surgical Abortion Complications \(/socialissues/life-issues/abortion-complications/surgical-abortion-complications\)](#)
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5. **Bias in Abortion Research**

Series About:

[Life Issues \(/socialissues/life-issues\)](#)

"Garbage in, garbage out." That is how one [epidemiologist \(https://insights.ovid.com/pubmed?pmid=20966682\)](https://insights.ovid.com/pubmed?pmid=20966682) explains the terrible state of health information in the U.S. This is especially true about abortion where the research is often flawed, inaccurate and biased. The result is that organizations like Planned Parenthood and the Guttmacher Institute are allowed to perpetuate the lie that abortion is a "safe, simple medical procedure."

The basic premise of medical research is that the conclusion is not influenced by the personal beliefs of the authors, but by the data and conclusions discovered through quality, unbiased research. That is not the case in most studies concerning abortion, and it has made it difficult to determine fact from fiction when it comes to abortion's physical and emotional cost.

An Example of Bias

In a 2013 [report \(https://journals.lww.com/greenjournal/Fulltext/2013/01000/Significant_Adverse_Events_and_Outcomes_After_25.aspx\)](https://journals.lww.com/greenjournal/Fulltext/2013/01000/Significant_Adverse_Events_and_Outcomes_After_25.aspx), chemical abortion was declared "safe" by researchers. However, every member of the study was either an employee of the only company that makes the drug mifepristone, Danco Laboratories, or is an employee of or has a close connection to Planned Parenthood. Hardly a team interested in highlighting abortion complications, especially since all the authors benefit financially from the practice.

The study concluded that though some women had serious side effects that resulted in hospitalizations, and in one case death, the abortion pill was safe to use since those complications only occurred in less than one percent of patients. **However, those conclusions were highly flawed.** Here are examples of some of the failings:

1. The researchers determined that the patients who could not be reached for follow up were fine. According to [Dr. James Trussell \(https://www.reuters.com/article/us-medical-abortion-are-safe-study/medical-abortion-are-safe-study-idUSBRE8BJ1CW20121220\)](https://www.reuters.com/article/us-medical-abortion-are-safe-study/medical-abortion-are-safe-study-idUSBRE8BJ1CW20121220), one of the authors, "We assume that if anything had happened that people would get back in touch with Planned Parenthood." Scientific studies generally don't "assume" outcomes.
2. Though they had a **large contingent of 233,805 patients, there is no data on how many or what percentage of patients were contacted for a follow up.**
3. The study was done in retrospect. As a result, the researchers could not identify the ages of the patients, the gestation of the children aborted, and many other **crucial factors.** A stunning oversight.
4. The study claimed that "an adverse event is subjective." This should not be the case if there are **clear procedures in place, proper staff oversight and training** like Planned Parenthood claims.
5. It contained clear cases of possible negligence or incompetence in relation to undiagnosed ectopic pregnancies. It is implied that most were only diagnosed after the client began taking the abortion pill and not before. A patient in the study died due to this oversight.
6. **Despite the limitations of the study,** the authors reached a baffling conclusion: "This study confirms that evidence-based medical abortion is highly effective and extremely safe."

This is just one study, but there are many more like it and it becomes more evident that a lot of crucial data is consistently overlooked. To give consent, a patient must be informed about the procedure they are about to have and the risks. After looking at many studies, it is almost impossible to conclude that true consent could be achieved because patients have not been accurately informed about the risks they are taking.

The Importance of Bias

Most authors cannot avoid their biases completely, but most at least strive for objectivity. In the abortion field, this fairness is difficult to find. In general, about 90 percent of the research studies surrounding abortion are positive about the practice. Any that are not, are usually viciously attacked even if the data is sound.

This can be seen in a [letter to the editor](#)

[\(https://journals.lww.com/greenjournal/fulltext/2010/03000/Immediate_Complications_After_Medical_Compared.27.aspx\)](https://journals.lww.com/greenjournal/fulltext/2010/03000/Immediate_Complications_After_Medical_Compared.27.aspx) section of the Obstetrics and Gynecology journal. A group of three American scientists attempted to dispute the results of a Finnish study that showed that 20 percent of chemical

abortion patients have an adverse effect event, not 5 percent as the U.S. scientists argued. However, at least two out of the three doctors in the study had direct connections to Planned Parenthood. One of the American doctors, [Carolyn Westhoff \(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oar7swoUtOg\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oar7swoUtOg), was a former Senior Medical Advisor for Planned Parenthood and was caught on camera at a conference crudely discussing aborted preborn baby body parts.

The case of Westhoff demonstrates it is best practice to Google the authors of research studies and the organizations that are funding their research. The findings will often help determine if the results are tainted by politics and ideology. This is especially in the field of abortion where those in support of the practice benefit financially and professionally. Those individuals have a vested interest in protecting their money flow.

Conclusion

The sad reality is that science is often not interested in actually evaluating the effectiveness and safety of any abortion. As a result of the highly charged political nature surrounding abortion, women are not fully informed about abortions most devastating complications and suffer the consequences.

Reports in Europe are often fairer in regards to abortion reporting, but a comprehensive research study on the United States has not been performed. That is a travesty of accountability and transparency by the abortion industry, which is protected by privacy laws and the lack of strong federal requirements for reporting.

The introduction of new restrictions surrounding the distribution of Title X funding in 2018 will hopefully begin the process of closing some of these legal loop holes and result in better reporting. If better reporting can be achieved, more information can be gathered and better studies can be performed so that the real risks of abortion can be understood. Women deserve the truth, not ideologically driven studies that are more interested in politics than fact.