

## GYNECOLOGY

# Abortion training in US obstetrics and gynecology residency programs



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## Background

Nearly 15 years ago, 51% of US obstetrics and gynecology residency training program directors reported that abortion training was routine, 39% reported training was optional, and 10% did not have training. The status of abortion training now is unknown.

## Objective

We sought to determine the current status of abortion training in obstetrics and gynecology residency programs.

## Study Design

Through surveying program directors of US obstetrics and gynecology residency training programs, we conducted a cross-sectional study on the availability and characteristics of abortion training. Training was defined as routine if included in residents' schedules with individuals permitted to opt out, optional as not

in the residents' schedules but available for individuals to arrange, and not available. Findings were compared between types of programs using bivariate analyses.

## Results

In all, 190 residency program directors (79%) responded. A total of 64% reported routine training with dedicated time, 31% optional, and 5% not available. Routine, scheduled training was correlated with higher median numbers of uterine evacuation procedures. While the majority believed their graduates to be competent in first-trimester aspiration (71%), medication abortion (66%), and induction termination (67%), only 22% thought graduates were competent in dilation and evacuation. Abortion procedures varied by clinical indication, with some programs limiting cases to pregnancy complication, fetal anomaly, or demise (Table).

## Conclusion

Abortion training in obstetrics and gynecology residency training programs has increased since 2004, yet many programs graduate residents without sufficient training to provide abortions for any indication, as well as dilation and evacuation. Professional training standards and support for family planning training have coincided with improved training, but there are still barriers to understand and overcome. ■

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**TABLE**  
**US obstetrics and gynecology residency program characteristics, by status of integrated abortion training**

| Variables                                                                     | Total,<br>n = 190 | Routine,<br>n = 121 | Optional,<br>n = 59 | None,<br>n = 10 | Pvalue |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|---------------------|---------------------|-----------------|--------|
| US region of residency program                                                |                   |                     |                     |                 |        |
| Northeast <sup>a</sup>                                                        | 57 (30)           | 40 (33)             | 16 (28)             | 1 (10)          | .26    |
| South <sup>b</sup>                                                            | 57 (30)           | 29 (24)             | 23 (40)             | 5 (50)          | .04    |
| Midwest <sup>c</sup>                                                          | 44 (23)           | 26 (22)             | 15 (26)             | 2 (20)          | .80    |
| West <sup>d</sup>                                                             | 31 (16)           | 25 (21)             | 4 (7)               | 2 (20)          | .06    |
| Faith affiliation of residency program                                        |                   |                     |                     |                 |        |
| Nonreligious, vs religiously affiliated programs                              | 161 (86)          | 106 (90)            | 47 (81)             | 8 (80)          | .30    |
| Uterine evacuation procedures                                                 |                   |                     |                     |                 |        |
| Medication abortion                                                           |                   |                     |                     |                 |        |
| Residents receive some training                                               | 188 (99)          | 120 (99)            | 58 (98)             | 10 (100)        | .82    |
| For all indications                                                           | 122 (64)          | 101 (83)            | 20 (34)             | 1 (10)          | .00    |
| Only for pregnancy complications or pregnancy loss                            | 48 (25)           | 14 (12)             | 29 (49)             | 5 (50)          | .00    |
| Only for pregnancy loss                                                       | 18 (9)            | 5 (4.1)             | 9 (15)              | 4 (40)          | .00    |
| No. done, mean (median)                                                       | 20 (13.5)         | 21.3 (15)           | 16.7 (10)           | 24.4 (15)       | .36    |
| Proportion of directors who report all residents are competent at graduation  | 120 (66)          | 78 (67)             | 34 (60)             | 8 (80)          | .38    |
| First-trimester aspiration abortion                                           |                   |                     |                     |                 |        |
| Residents receive some training                                               | 177 (93)          | 114 (94)            | 53 (90)             | 10 (100)        | .37    |
| For all indications                                                           | 118 (62)          | 98 (81)             | 20 (34)             | 0 (0)           | .00    |
| Only for pregnancy complications or pregnancy loss                            | 40 (21)           | 11 (9.1)            | 23 (39)             | 6 (60)          | .00    |
| Only for pregnancy loss                                                       | 19 (10)           | 5 (4.1)             | 10 (17)             | 4 (40)          | .00    |
| No. done, mean (median)                                                       | 29.2 (35)         | 41.3 (30)           | 22.0 (20)           | 28.9 (35)       | .00    |
| Proportion of directors who report all residents are competent at graduation  | 124 (71)          | 78 (70)             | 38 (73)             | 8 (80)          | .74    |
| Second-trimester dilation and evacuation                                      |                   |                     |                     |                 |        |
| Residents receive some training                                               | 171 (90)          | 115 (95)            | 47 (80)             | 9 (90)          | .01    |
| For all indications                                                           | 95 (50)           | 83 (69)             | 12 (20.3)           | 0 (0)           | .00    |
| Only for pregnancy complications or fetal demise                              | 63 (33)           | 29 (24)             | 29 (49)             | 5 (50)          | .00    |
| Only for fetal demise                                                         | 13 (7)            | 3 (2.5)             | 6 (10)              | 4 (40)          | .00    |
| No. done, mean (median)                                                       | 11.2 (5)          | 13.9 (10)           | 5.6 (4)             | 5.3 (2)         | .00    |
| Proportion of directors who report all residents are competent at graduation: |                   |                     |                     |                 |        |
| To 17 6/7 wk                                                                  | 36 (22)           | 24 (22)             | 11 (23)             | 1 (11)          | .71    |
| To 19 6/7 wk                                                                  | 9 (6)             | 9 (8.4)             | 0 (0)               | 0 (0)           | .86    |
| To 21 6/7 wk                                                                  | 1 (1)             | 1 (0.9)             | 0 (0)               | 0 (0)           | .78    |

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TABLE

**US obstetrics and gynecology residency program characteristics, by status of integrated abortion training** (continued)

| Variables                                                                    | Total,<br>n = 190 | Routine,<br>n = 121 | Optional,<br>n = 59 | None,<br>n = 10 | Pvalue |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|---------------------|---------------------|-----------------|--------|
| Second-trimester induction termination                                       |                   |                     |                     |                 |        |
| Residents receive some training                                              | 185 (97)          | 118 (98)            | 57 (97)             | 10 (100)        | .81    |
| For all indications                                                          | 61 (32)           | 56 (46)             | 5 (8.5)             | 0 (0)           | .00    |
| Only for pregnancy complications or fetal demise                             | 104 (55)          | 53 (44)             | 45 (76)             | 6 (60)          | .00    |
| Only for fetal demise                                                        | 20 (11)           | 9 (7.4)             | 7 (12)              | 4 (40)          | .01    |
| No. done, mean (median)                                                      | 16.2 (10)         | 18.3 (10)           | 11.8 (10)           | 12.6 (10)       | .05    |
| Proportion of directors who report all residents are competent at graduation | 110 (67)          | 70 (65)             | 31 (65)             | 9 (90)          | .27    |
| Obstetrics and gynecology review committee training requirements             |                   |                     |                     |                 |        |
| Report that they meet review committee requirement for abortion training     | 158 (90)          | 113 (97)            | 41 (84)             | 4 (40)          | .00    |
| Had been cited by review committee for not meeting requirement               | 7 (4)             | 0 (0)               | 6 (10)              | 1 (10)          | .02    |

Values are n (%) unless otherwise specified.

<sup>a</sup> Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Vermont, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania; <sup>b</sup> Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, District of Columbia, West Virginia, Alabama, Kentucky, Mississippi, Tennessee, Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, Texas; <sup>c</sup> Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, Wisconsin, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota; <sup>d</sup> Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah, Wyoming, Alaska, California, Hawaii, Oregon, Washington.

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