

Research Briefing

“It’s a small bit of advice, but actually on the day, made such a difference...”:
perceptions of quality in abortion care in England and Wales

Katherine C. Whitehouse, Rebecca Blaylock, Shelly Makleff, Patricia A. Lohr

Background

Quality of care (QOC) is increasingly thought of as an important contributor to healthcare outcomes. However, there is little agreement on how we should define quality in abortion care or how we should measure it.

Our study aimed to explore perceptions and experiences of abortion quality in England and Wales.

Methods

We interviewed 24 patients who had an abortion at BPAS in the previous 6 months.

During the interviews, we explored patient’s experience during their abortion at key points in the pathway, what they thought contributed to or detracted from a high-quality abortion experience, and their reflections on quality of care in general.

Key Findings

We identified 4 major themes that created a high-quality experience:

- Positive interpersonal interactions with staff or other patients
- Being informed and prepared for treatment
- Participation in and choices in care
- Accessibility

Nearly every patient said that positive interactions with staff were important for a high-quality service. Positive interactions were often described as the best part of

their abortion experience, and negative interactions as the worst.

“I left the clinic feeling like I’d been helped, and that was really important”

Participants said that being informed and prepared made for a high-quality experience. When there were differences between the information given and the actual experience, participants viewed this negatively.

Being able to make choices about their care, for example, the method of abortion (abortion pills vs. surgery), was important for a high-quality abortion experience.

Finally, participants identified access to care, specifically waiting times and travel, as an important indication of quality. Where waiting times and travel were short this was viewed positively.

Conclusions

By understanding how our clients view abortion care quality, we create a more patient-centred abortion service. In the next stages of this project, we plan to create an instrument to measure whether we are providing a high-quality abortion service and to help us make improvements where needed.

Read the paper

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