Abortion and HIV

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Together, we can change the course of the HIV epidemic…one woman at a time.

#onewomanatatime

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What Is an Abortion?

• Common medical procedure
• Intentional termination = induced (elective) abortion
  – First trimester: medication abortion
    • No need for healthcare provider
  – Later: procedural (surgical) abortion
    • Early: uterine (vacuum) aspiration
    • Later: D(ilation) & E(vacuation)
    • Performed by healthcare provider
• Miscarriage = spontaneous abortion
Abortion Is Healthcare

• Medical emergencies may require abortion
• Everyone has right to decide about their own body
  – Includes right to decide whether/when to have children
• Contraception to prevent pregnancy
  – Not always possible or may fail
• Sexual healthcare
  – HIV, other STIs
  – Cervical, anal cancer
  – Contraception, PrEP
  – Abortion care

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Abortion Laws Affect Other Healthcare

- Laws also restrict information about abortions
  - Punish healthcare providers for giving information
  - Providers leave restrictive states
    - Rural maternity wards close for lack of staff
- Defunding clinics stops HIV testing and prenatal care
- Global gag rule
  - No funding for global sexual health services that provide information about abortion
  - Reversed in 2021 by US President Biden
• Before effective HIV treatment
  - Women told to have abortions
    • Idea: prevent HIV transmission to fetus

• Current HIV treatment
  - Chances of transmission to fetus very low
    • Can have HIV-negative baby if choosing to have child

• Right to abortion independent of HIV status
  - Right is threatened in US and around the world
Abortion Bans and Pregnancy Duration

• Providers calculate time since last period
  - Reason: people track their periods, but often don’t know precisely when they conceived

• Ovulation 2-3 weeks after last period
  - People considered 2-3 weeks pregnant at conception

• Abortion laws based on provider calculation
  - 6-week abortion ban: period is only 1-2 weeks late

• Irregular periods common in people living with HIV
  - Person may not know they are pregnant when ban starts
Pregnancy termination throughout history
- Back then: herbal remedies, unsafe procedures
  - People die from unsafe abortions
- Now: safe terminations possible

When safe terminations no longer available ...
- People will resort to unsafe practices
- Need time to find underground network
  - Later-term abortions become more common
- Need money for procedure and/or travel
  - Disproportionate impact on poor people
If You Are Pregnant

• All health issues: *you* decide about your body
• Living with HIV:
  — Safe ways to give birth or
  — Terminate pregnancy
• If right to choose restricted, see at right

National Organizations
• Abortion Finder
• Planned Parenthood
• National Network of Abortion Funds
• National Abortion Hotline
• The Brigid Alliance

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To learn more about this topic, please read the full fact sheet:

- Abortion and HIV

For more fact sheets and to connect to our community of women living with HIV, visit:

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