

# Frequency of Illegal Abortion among Patients Opting for Induced Abortion

SAEMA TEHSEEN, AFIFA WAHEED, NABEELA SHAMI

## ABSTRACT

**Objectives:** To determine the frequency of illegal abortion as a cause of induced abortion, in cases reporting at Ghurki Trust Teaching Hospital, Lahore.

**Study design:** Cross-sectional survey.

**Setting:** Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, Ghurki Trust Teaching Hospital, Lahore.

**Duration of study:** Six months from 25-12-08 to 24-06-09.

**Materials and methods:** Total 110 cases were taken. Complete history including reason for seeking abortion like financial constraints and last child too young were asked.

**Results:** Mean age of patients was found to be  $25.4 \pm 2.4$ . 92.7% cases had previous 1-2 abortions. Out of a total of 110 patients 60% were illegal abortions.

**Conclusion:** Induced abortion is quite common in our country. Moreover a fairly large percentage of women go for illegal abortions. The factors leading to this practice are early marriages with repeated pregnancies which are closely spaced and unwanted. This can be prevented by better education and awareness and access to family planning services.

**Key words:** Illegal abortion, Induced abortion.

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## INTRODUCTION

Induced abortion is defined as the elective termination of pregnancy during the first or second trimester by surgical or medical means<sup>1</sup>. Induced abortion can be an indicator of unintended pregnancies and lack of access to family planning services legal, moral and religious contents surrounding abortions are likely to have different impact on subgroups regarding abortion decision<sup>2</sup>. Induced abortion was found in 5.75% patients in a study carried out in department of obstetrics and gynaecology, Jinnah Postgraduate Medical Center Karachi in 2004<sup>3</sup>.

Mid trimester abortion constitutes 10-15% of all induced abortion. During the last decade, medical methods for mid-trimester induced abortion have shown a considerable development and have become safe and more accessible<sup>4</sup>.

The rationale of the study is to highlight the need of proper counseling of the patient regarding contraception to avoid unnecessary illegal abortions and their inherent complications.

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*Department of Obs. & Gynae. Ghurki Trust Teaching Hospital, Lahore*

*Correspondence: Dr. Saema Tehseen, 15 E Army Flats, Askari 1, Sarfraz Rafiqi Road, Lahore, e-mail: saematehseen@yahoo.com Telephone: 36623644*

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

It was a cross-sectional survey carried out in Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology Unit II of Ghurki Trust Teaching Hospital, Lahore from 25-12-08 to 24-06-09. All married women between twenty and thirty years of age who presented in OPD or emergency within one month of induced abortion done by untrained birth attendants on the basis of history were included in the study. Gestational trophoblastic disease diagnosed on the basis of ultrasonography were excluded from the study. The sampling technique was non-probability purposive sampling. The selection of 110 patients was done from Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology. Both emergency and OPD patients were collected. Informed consent with religious and ethical considerations was taken. Complete information like age and number of previous abortions was obtained. Detailed history including reason for seeking abortion like financial constraints, last child too young, was asked.

## RESULTS

Table-1 shows that 58 patients (52.7%) among patients presenting with induced abortion were between 21 and 25 years of age. Whereas 52 patients (47.3%) were between 26-30 years and mean age of patients was found to be  $25.4 \pm 2.4$ .

Fairly large number i.e. 102 (92.7%) had previous 1-2 abortions whereas 8 cases (7.3%) had a total of 3 abortions (Table 2). Out of a total of 110 patients 66(60%) were illegal abortions and 44(40%) were legal abortions (Table 3).

Table 1: Distribution of cases by age (n=110)

Age (year)	=n	%age
21-25	58	52.7
26-30	52	47.3

Mean±SD 25.4±2.4

Table 2: Distribution of cases by number of previous abortions (n=110)

Abortion	=n	%age
1-2	102	92.7
3	08	07.3

Table 3: Distribution of cases by illegal abortion (n=110)

Illegal abortion	=n	%age
Yes	66	60.0
No	44	40.0

## DISCUSSION

Induced abortion comprises of a good percentage of people attending the hospital. It is associated with enormous morbidity and major shareholder of this is illegal abortion. This study was carried out to find out the frequency of illegal abortion among total induced abortions reporting at hospital. This study emphasizes that certain recommendations can be made to improve the outcome by escalating public awareness and education.

In our study it was found that patients seeking induced abortion more often fell in younger age group. 52.7% of patients were between 21-25 years whereas 47.3% were between 26-30 years of age. This reflects the trend of early marriages in this part of the world. This is in consistency with a study carried out in Australia which concluded that one in four Australian women terminates pregnancy, most often when young<sup>5</sup>. In contrast to this induced abortions were found to be associated with severe known pregnancy risk factors specifically maternal age older than 35 years<sup>6</sup>. Induced abortion between 15-24 years was 55.6% in another study carried out in Ankara for induced abortion before and after legal regulation of induced abortion<sup>7</sup> which is similar to our study where 52.7% patients were between 21 to 25 years.

This fact is comparable to a study of induced abortion in Denmark, which concluded that strongest factor associated with decision of having an abortion was being single, followed by being 19 years or

below and having 2 children or more<sup>2</sup>. Young married women of low socioeconomic status with a strong preference for male children were predominant recipients of induced abortions in India<sup>8</sup>.

The frequency of illegal abortions among induced abortions constitutes a fairly large portion amongst cases reporting at hospital in our study. Out of 110 cases reporting over six months time 66(60%) were illegal and 44(40%) were legal. The percentage of illegal abortion is comparable to a study carried out in Chinese female workers in Hong Kong which showed that induced abortion was found in 55.6% of women<sup>9</sup> which is slightly lower but still comparable to our observation. Comparing the frequency of illegal abortion among induced abortions study done by Stanley et al<sup>10</sup> on incidence of induced abortion showed that 60% of induced abortions were found in South Eastern Asia which is the same as in present study. Almost similar rates (54%) were found overall in the developing world. The incidence was slightly raised (78%) in South Central Asia whereas little lower percentage (42%) was found in Western Asia. China had (76%) a little higher percentage for illegal abortions, whereas almost half (47%) abortions were illegal amongst induced abortions in Caribbean region of Latin America. Very high percentage was found in East Africa (100%), middle Africa (100%), South Africa (100%) and North Africa (96%), fairly low percentage was found in Southern Europe (12%)<sup>10</sup>. All this data reveals that result of our study are comparable to figures in South East Asia, South Central Asia, Western Asia, China and Caribbean region, but is quite low in comparison to Africa and quite high in comparison to Europe and North America.

On the basis of studies it is beyond doubt henceforth that there is a convincing evidence for fairly large number of abortions being induced illegally. Overall various factors affect the response of a female towards pregnancy and among these are younger age group, already having desired number of children, last child too young and unemployment<sup>2</sup>.

Inability to use contraception either due to lack of access or awareness or partners disinterest per-se plays an important role as this is the most common factor and predictor of induced abortion<sup>11</sup>. Social, religious and political inhibitions for contraception cause a rise in induced abortion rate<sup>12</sup>.

In a nutshell therefore, induced abortion is governed by variables which can be improved by improving awareness of the women towards contraceptive measures and practicing safe methods of abortions to reduce the incidence of illegal abortions.

## CONCLUSION

Induced abortion is quite common in our country. Moreover a fairly large percentage of women go for illegal abortions. The factors leading to this practice are early marriages with repeated pregnancies which are closely spaced and unwanted. Moreover poverty and lack of education, awareness and access to health services compel people for illegal termination of pregnancies by untrained people and in unsafe conditions. This burden can be reduced by awareness and easy access to proper contraception so as to avoid unwanted pregnancies which are the main reason for illegal abortions.

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