

MORGAN:

Hello everyone, and thank you for being here virtually to learn about our study, “Teledoulas: Medical Students’ experience providing remote support for abortion patients.”

My name is Morgan Liu, and I am joined by Lauren Claypoole.

Before beginning, we would like to share that we do not have any financial interests or relationships to disclose.

LAUREN:

1 in 4 pregnancy-capable people will have an abortion in their lifetime. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, we have seen an increase in patients seeking medication abortions, an abortion where the patient swallows two medications and passes the pregnancy at home without requiring an inperson procedure. In Hawaii, we are able to provide these abortions through telemedicine. Patients are very satisfied with this method, however can feel isolated and may lack support.

Covid also drastically cut down direct patient care opportunities for medical students, especially those in the preclinical years. Even before the pandemic, there was limited exposure to abortion in medical schools.

MORGAN:

To address the needs of both medical students and medication abortion patients, The Doula Project was started in 2020 as a program to provide JABSOM students with the opportunity to serve remotely as telemedicine doulas (termed “teledoulas”) for patients undergoing medication abortions in Hawaii.

The purpose of this study was to investigate medical students’ experiences volunteering as teledoulas in providing emotional support, education, pain management, and self-advocacy to patients remotely through the medication abortion process.

LAUREN:

The doula training included a values clarification workshop and in depth education on medication abortion, potential complications, pain management options and the role of the teledoula. Once trained, teledoulas were paired with interested patients and communicated with them by text or phone call throughout their medication abortion.

To assess our study purpose, we administered online pre- and post-training surveys for participating teledoulas to assess:

- (1) clinical knowledge and attitudes towards abortion
- (2) acquisition of skills including communication and patient advocacy
- (3) impact on professional goals pursuing fields in reproductive healthcare.

28 teledoulas volunteered across 2 training cohorts to participate.

MORGAN:

93.3% of the teledoulas did not have clinical exposure to abortion care prior to this training program. After training, as displayed in this figure, the overwhelming majority felt more capable answering questions regarding the medication abortion procedure, about common complications, pain management options, and in advocating for their patients.

After participating as a teledoula, 60% of the teledoulas reported a greater inclination to pursue a career in women's health or incorporate it into their career path, and 80% reported that they intend to become abortion providers.

LAUREN:

While this study has a small sample size, we conclude that our overall purpose of The Doula Project was effective based on the perceived improvements reported by medical students volunteering as teledoulas in clinical knowledge, patient advocacy, and communication skills.

Just as importantly, clinical exposure to abortion care through direct patient interaction, even provided remotely, can positively impact a medical student's awareness of reproductive health, support their career goals, and improve their self-perceived ability to communicate with patients.

Thank you for your time!