

# Medical Abortion in the United States and Canada—Why so different?

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# Background



- Mifepristone for medical abortions
  - approved for use with misoprostol in the United States since September 2000
  - not approved for use in Canada
- Context in which provision of abortions occurs different in US and Canada
- **Objective:**  
To understand differences in medical abortion provision in the US compared to Canada

# Methods

- Cross-sectional survey of abortion facilities identified via publically available resources in the US ( $n=703$ ) and Canada ( $n=94$ )
- Mail and internet survey from June-December 2013
- Administrator and provider questionnaires
  - One to five providers per facility who provided the greatest proportion of medical abortion procedures in 2012
- Facility level & provider level analyses by country
  - Fisher's exact tests for categorical variables
  - T-test for continuous variables

# Results: Response rate

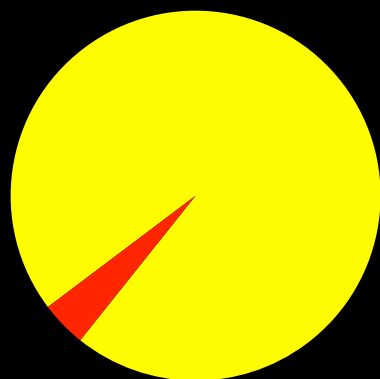
- 383/703 (54%) of facilities responded in US
  - 28 additional facilities originally on list had closed/stopped offering abortion services in 2012-13
- 78/94 (83%) of facilities responded in Canada
- In 2012, these facilities provided an estimated:
  - 138,182 first trimester medical abortions (135,503 in US and 2,679 in Canada)
  - 1,968 second trimester medical abortions (1,646 in US and 322 in Canada)
  - First trimester medical abortions comprised 35% (US) and 4% (Canada) of all first trimester procedures
- 348 medical abortion providers from the US and 60 from Canada responded to provider questionnaires

# Results: Facility-level

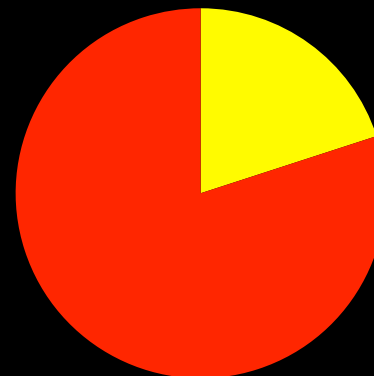
Provide first trimester medical abortion procedures?

365/381 (96%) in US

16/74 (22%) in Canada

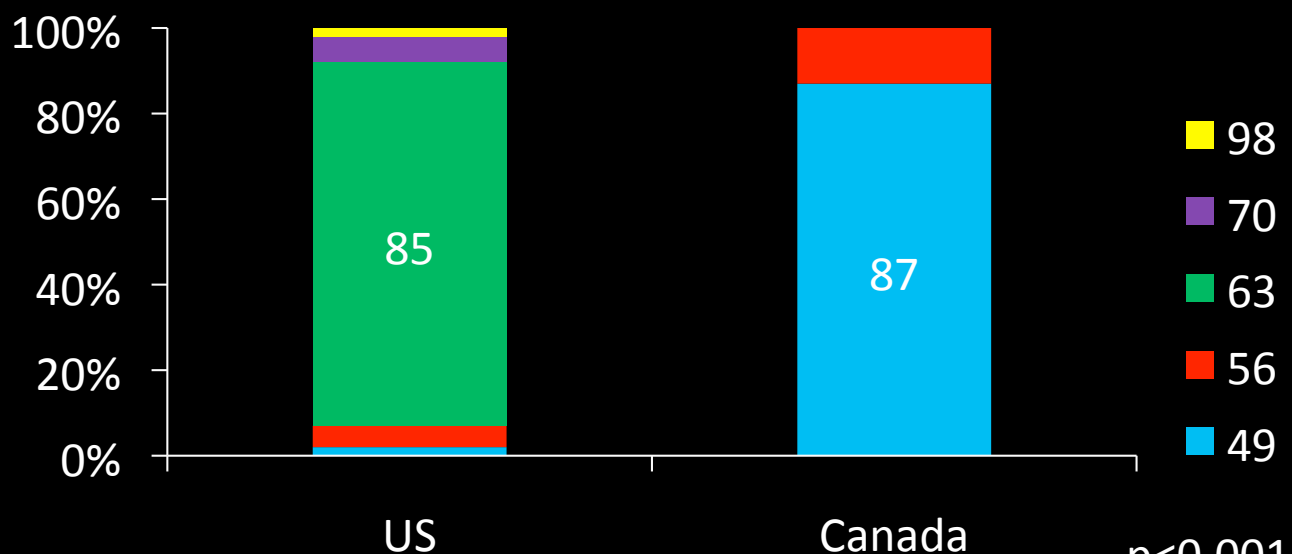


■ Yes  
■ No



$p < 0.001$

Among facilities that provide, up to how many days LMP?

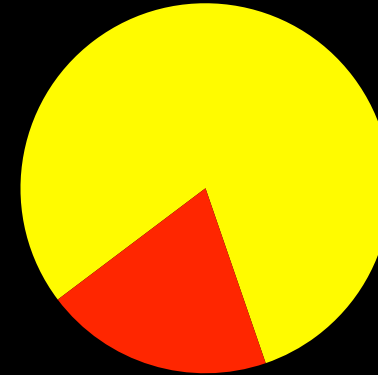
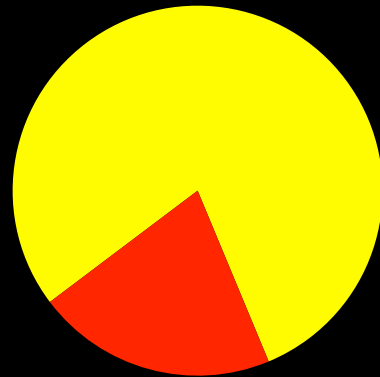


$p < 0.001$

# Results: Provider characteristics

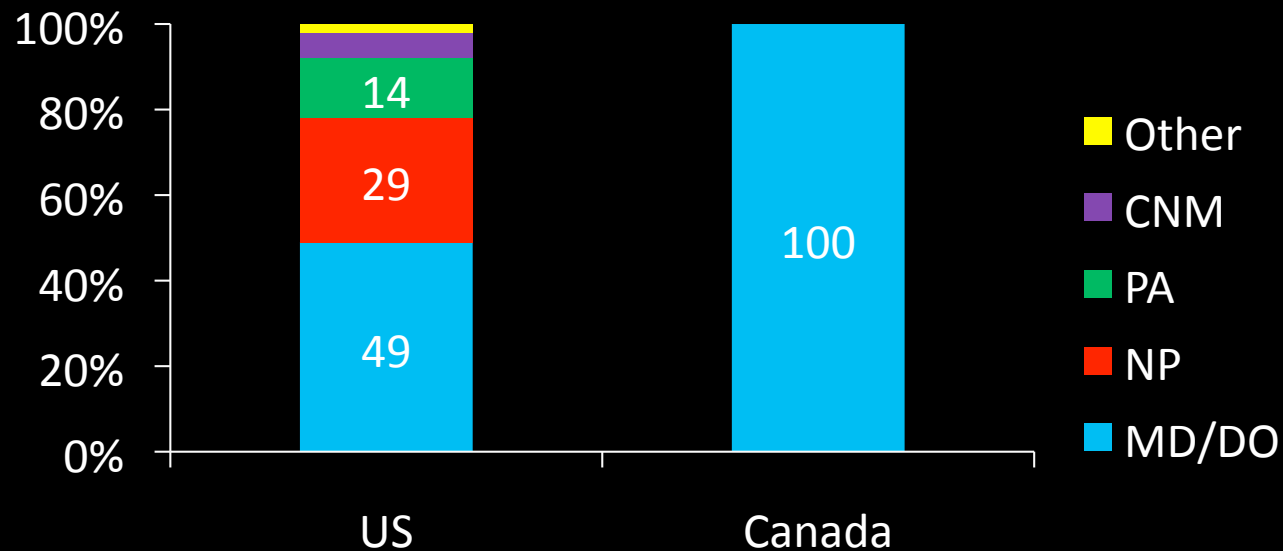
79% female in US  
(n=348)

80% female in Canada  
(n=59)



Female  
Male

## Clinical degree



# Results: Provider characteristics

- No real difference in age,  $p=0.55$ 
  - In US, mean age was  $49 \pm 13$  (range 24-89)
    - 5% over age 70
  - In Canada, mean age is  $48 \pm 10$  (range 30-68)
- More specialization in US than Canada ,  $p<0.001$ 
  - In US, 19% family or general practice, 49% ob/gyn, 29% women's health, 3% other
  - In Canada, 59% family or general practice, 32% ob/gyn, 5% women's health, 4% other
- Proportion of clinical work focused on contraception and abortion differs by country
  - Mean of 67% among US providers versus 39% in Canada,  $p<0.001$

# Results: Provider reports on regimens

	US	Canada
Dose drug 1	mifepristone 200 mg 98%	methotrexate 50 mg/m <sup>2</sup> 97%
Location	mifepristone taken at facility 93%	na
Dose drug 2	misoprostol 800 mcg 91%	misoprostol 800 mcg 93%
Misoprostol route (p<0.001)		
Buccal	85%	13%
Vaginal	9%	77%
Oral	3%	10%
Other	3%	0%
Location	misoprostol at home 97%	misoprostol at home 97%
Repeat dose of misoprostol (p<0.001)		
Take at home	2%	95%
As needed	95%	5%
Never given	3%	0%

na = not applicable



# Results: Provider reports on antibiotics and analgesics

Antibiotic/analgesic practices	US	Canada	P-value
Provide antibiotic to every medical abortion patient	88%	27%	<0.001
Among those who do provide antibiotics routinely (n=311):			
Doxycycline	62%	27%	<0.001
Azithromycin	24%	26%	
Doxycycline or Azithromycin	11%	0%	
Metronidazole	1%	47%	
Other	2%	0%	
Analgesics provided routinely*			
None	0%	12%	<0.001
NSAID	76%	75%	0.87
Acetaminophen	5%	20%	<0.001
Acetaminophen with codeine	34%	60%	<0.001
Oxycodone with acetaminophen	11%	5%	<0.001
Hydrocodone with acetaminophen	42%	2%	<0.001
Hydromorphone	0%	5%	0.003

na = not applicable; \* do not sum to 100%, as multiple responses allowed

# Conclusions

- Medical abortion is provided **less commonly in Canada than in the US**
- Medical abortions are **more often provided by family physicians in Canada** compared to the US, where specialists or non-physicians provide most medical abortions
- Some aspects of regimens differ by country
  - mifepristone vs. methotrexate
  - route of administration for misoprostol
- **Routine antibiotic use is less common in Canada than in US**
- **Use of opioid analgesics is more common in the US than Canada**

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