

Delay in presentation; beyond the numbers

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plan

why does this matter?

factors associated with second trimester procedures

overview of qualitative research findings

some implications

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a quick note on terminology

potential association of 'late' with
not ideal
negativity
blame
lack of initiative
misuse of medical facilities

(even 'delayed' may be seen negatively)

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why does this matter?

pressures in some countries to reduce upper limit ..

... or have different regulations applying for first trimester than second trimester

but what would impact be?

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why does this matter?

parallel with students' essays?
moving deadline would NOT lead to many more late essays, but ...
... reduction in prevarication, better planning and organisation, etc.

BUT abortion processes are not the same
delays in presentations are due to a series of barriers and circumstances

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why does it matter?

higher risk procedure
fewer facilities (and clinicians) available
cost implications (travel, payment for procedure, etc.)
greater uncertainty and stress
possible greater psychological impact
possible greater pain experienced

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why do research?

talk draws upon
our Rowntree funded study of second trimester
abortions
(Ingham, Lee, Clements, Stone)
review of international literature for Rowlands
book
Rowlands, S. (ed.) (2014) *Abortion Care*, CUP

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study on reasons for second trimester procedures

England and Wales study
Ingham, Lee, Clements, Stone (2008)
883 women aged 16 plus
questionnaire PLUS space for additional
comments
provided long list of possible reasons (developed
from qualitative research)

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overview of research findings

median gestation overall was almost 16 weeks

five main factors accounting for delay (%)

suspecting pregnancy (70)
seeking pregnancy test (64)
deciding to have an abortion (79)
asking for abortion (28)
obtaining abortion (60)

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but what lies behind the numbers?

some snapshots taken from the qualitative
comments

not intended to shock but to illustrate the
realities of many women's lives during this
sometimes challenging process

reliant on women's accounts - not verified or
probed in interview

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but what lies behind the numbers?

examples of four main categories presented here:

denial
doubts and uncertainties
relationship dynamics
clinician induced delays

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denial

I didn't want to think about it. I went to my appointment
and the week that I was waiting I blocked it out like it
wasn't happening (18yo, 19 weeks)

That I was scared and did not want to believe it until my
friend and boyfriend helped me and my mum (15yo, 15
weeks)

I didn't realise because I didn't want to realise (18yo, 22
weeks)

The pregnancy was due to a sexual assault so pushed to
the back of my mind and didn't want to tell anyone, but I
am so pleased I did when I did (25yo, 23 weeks)

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denial

I basically was terrified of either option and decided that if I ignored it everything would be ok. I would like to add that there are not enough readily available services via doctors for women to discuss options (25yo, 19 weeks) an appointment was booked for the termination. I didn't go for that appointment and booked another one. I took two months from the initial appointment to have the courage to finally go through with it (24yo, 19 weeks)
Reasons - generally scared about sorting it out and didn't want to admit that I was pregnant (19yo, 18 weeks)

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doubts and uncertainties

I got myself an appointment for three days after seeing the FPC, but when the day came I couldn't bring myself to go even though that was what I wanted (23yo, 16 weeks)
I was given a referral letter at 9 weeks but was not sure if it was what I wanted to do (21yo, 18 weeks)
I wanted to be sure I was 100% sure of my decision because it's very important and you can't go back on it. I was also scared about having surgery (16yo, 13 weeks)
I didn't want an abortion at first but my partner and I came to terms with the facts that we are not ready mentally or financially for a baby (18yo, 21 weeks)

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doubts and uncertainties

But the main reason for my termination is money, what I think is really sad. My partner and me try to get benefits for our son to afford a nursery cause he works and I want to work back full time but a lady in jobcentre said I will receive nothing! I need to live on social to get help. How sad is that. That's why I've to do an abortion, cause another baby's not affordable for me and my partner. It made me really sad (29yo, 15 weeks)

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doubts and uncertainties

In my country abortion is illegal so I'm happy so I get pregnant here. Everybody was helpful and nice. Thanks!! (28yo, 13 weeks)
I kepted changing my mind wether I should keep it or not through the whole time (45yo, 22 weeks)
I wasn't very sure so I tried to hold it off as long as I could (17yo, 16 weeks)
At first I thought I wanted to keep the baby, but realised after discussion I was too young and a baby is a big responsibility both financially and mentally (15yo, 14 weeks)

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relationship dynamics

We wanted baby as it was planned, but he became controlling, also his views on women's roles were very selfish and old-fashioned and he became lazy (33yo, 13 weeks)

I was living abroad with my partner and found out I was pregnant at 2 weeks. I had planned to keep the baby but things turned violent and I contacted bpas, flew home 2 days later, contacted my doctor 2 1/2 weeks later after lots of thought and had my first appointment with bpas 3 days later (24yo, 16 weeks)

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relationship dynamics

If my circumstances at home and with my partner were different then I would never have doen this 'cos I don't agree with them but I felt I had no choice (24 yo, 22 weeks)

My relationship with my partner has changed due to the fact that he wanted the baby but I didn't want it because I just had one child 11 months ago and I don't feel ready to have another one yet (23yo, 19 weeks)

My two children and partner's children didn't want me to have a baby and I was left deserted by partner with no support (38yo, 14 weeks)

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clinician induced delays

Although doctors did not say they were against abortion, their lack of help implied this (28yo, 21 weeks)

I was referred to XXX hospital. The doctor I saw advised emotionally I would not cope with an abortion and I should have the baby. I went back to my GP ... (36yo, 22 weeks)

GP said the abortion was not going to be paid by the NHS as it was over 12 weeks (22yo, 16 weeks)

I was told by dr the only option was adoption as I was nearly 18 weeks, so I called FP for advice and found out I was allowed an abortion up to 24 weeks (20yo, 21 weeks)

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clinician induced delays

After speaking to one doctor who said I should take a few more days to think about it and tried putting me off by telling me that they would have to cut the foetus up to pull it out! Is this good ethics?? (33yo, 16 weeks)

My GP knew I was 19 to 20 weeks pregnant when I went to ask for a termination. He said he would refer me to my local hospital as a matter of urgency - he never did - my mum made all the appointments. He knew my local hospital didn't carry out the procedure after 18 weeks (24yo, 23 weeks)

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clinician induced delays

After viewing me with a disgust he did little to conceal, my GP gave me a telephone number to contact bpas (34yo, 18 weeks)

I feel the FPC in XXX is not a good place to go because the first time I went the consultant was very unsupportive and the second time I attended I received really upsetting misinformation from my consultant about the abortion procedure that would happen, which was completely untrue (18yo, 21 weeks)

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clinician induced delays

I attended the appointment which turned out to be a place for anti-abortion advice. I was made to watch each stage of terminations including what dead foetuses look like. I kept being informed that this was the procedure as specified by the Royal College of Gynaecology. I think it lasted for hours and was very gruelling. (33yo, 17 weeks)

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research from elsewhere

basically similar results from other countries, including USA, The Netherlands, Finland, Singapore, Vietnam
different emphasis depending on nature of health services (so USA and Vietnam, for example, have more delays due to raising money)

... and there may be more pregnancies that are not terminated that would have been in a different context
... and some that are carried out illegally due to restricted policies, etc., so biasing patterns

generally, more vulnerable women in populations are more likely to be in 'delaying' group

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key learning points

still a great deal of ignorance about bodies amongst some women

lack of knowledge regarding the processes involved in abortion

stigma about abortion

ignorance amongst doctors and nurses
(some genuine, some seemingly disruptive)

services sometimes impersonal and seemingly judgemental

powerful influences of financial contexts

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impact of raising upper limit (in countries with lower limit than UK)

what is the rationale for lower limits (eg 13 weeks)?

raising upper limit would enable more women to exercise their choice

many situations are not (and could not have been) anticipated

so, if the logic of choice is permitted, why restrict it?

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mood repair procedures

They was unhelpfull and so [went to] social services and said thay would tell my mum and dad that I had sex, she was rude to us and just sore us as littel kids. Thanks for helping us (14yo, 19 weeks)

I would like to just say thanks and that I am glad we are able to make these choices about our future when something unplanned like this happens. The scariest part is thinking you are alone but I did not feel that way and the people and nurses were extremely nice and helpful (25yo, 13 weeks)

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finally ...

implications for education ...
... about bodies
... about procedures
... about realities

implications for levels of professionalism ...
... training

... accurate information and early support

implications for commissioning and monitoring (and complaints procedures)

and for respect for women's rights

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a mini-rant

Professor David Paton, Nottingham Business School
active member of SPUC

talk to 14/15 year olds in Nottinghamshire school

As you could probably guess from the name of the society, he is against abortion and believes that if something is wrong you don't make it legal! These quotes and comments I am sure will be very helpful in Year Ten's coursework and we as Year Tens, would like to say thank you to him and to all Year Tens, who were very polite to him during this hour. "You wouldn't go up to a homeless man and say "you're alone, unwanted and we're going to kill you" was one of the points he made. When he was describing his organisation, he said that it was there for comfort, counselling and all round help. So, if you want more information about abortion, the helpline is below...

(Kimberley School newsletter, March 2008)

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