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## Having an Abortion Using Mifepristone And Home Misoprostol: A Qualitative Analysis Of Women's Experiences

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**CONTEXT:** Women choose medical over surgical abortion because it is more natural, more private and less painful. Whether their perceptions change during the medical abortion process has not been explored.

**METHODS:** A nonprobability sample of 43 participants in a clinical trial of abortion using mifepristone completed two open-ended questionnaires about this method, one before taking mifepristone and the second during their follow-up clinic visit 4-8 days after taking misoprostol. Thirty women participated in in-depth interviews 1-6 weeks following their abortion. Researchers analyzed transcripts to identify common themes.

**RESULTS:** On the first visit to the clinic, women expressed anxiety and uncertainty about the effectiveness of medical abortion, guilt or ambivalence, and a desire to avoid surgery. For most women, emotional distress decreased after their abortion. Control was the overarching theme women expressed regarding the meaning of the procedure: Women stressed the importance of being able to select the type of abortion procedure, to maintain control over their future and to preserve their family's quality of life, given the constraints of time, finances and emotional resources. In in-depth interviews, eight women remained concerned about long-term health effects; 18 said that having an abortion at home was a comfortable experience.

**CONCLUSIONS:** Learning whether women are concerned about personal control may help clinicians identify appropriate candidates for medical abortion. In addition, clinicians could help allay women's anxiety at their first abortion visit by explaining that the uncertainties posed by any medical procedure create similar feelings. Clinicians also should reemphasize at the follow-up visit that there are no long-term health effects related to abortion.

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