

Advanced Practice Clinicians as Abortion Providers

Expanding Access to Care by Increasing the
Pool of Abortion Providers

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Who are Advanced Practice Clinicians?

A Clinician Trained Beyond Basic Competency in a Clinical Role

- Nurse Practitioners
- Midwives
- Clinical Officers
- Physician Assistants



Nurse Practitioners

- Basic nursing education varies across jurisdictions, based on the needs of the health care system, and the availability of educational resources
- Nurse practitioners have advanced education beyond basic nursing competencies in assessment, treatment, management, and evaluation of care

Midwives

- In some jurisdictions, nursing education is included as part of basic midwifery education; midwifery education may follow the completion of basic nursing education
- Midwifery education at either the pre-licensure or post-licensure level is based on the development of independent practice competencies that include assessment, treatment, management, and evaluation of care

Clinical or Medical Officers

- Clinical Officers or Medical Officers are trained to provide care autonomously that includes assessment, treatment, management, and evaluation of care, especially where there is a lack of an adequate physician work force.

Physician Assistants

- Physician Assistants are trained to provide care under the supervision of a physician; this care can also be delegated by the physician to occur outside of his/her direct supervision.

APCs and Legal Authority for Practice

Can APCs legally provide abortions?

- The ability to provide abortions by clinicians other than physicians may be a matter of legal authority or jurisdiction
- In some areas, only physicians are allowed to provide abortions as a matter of law

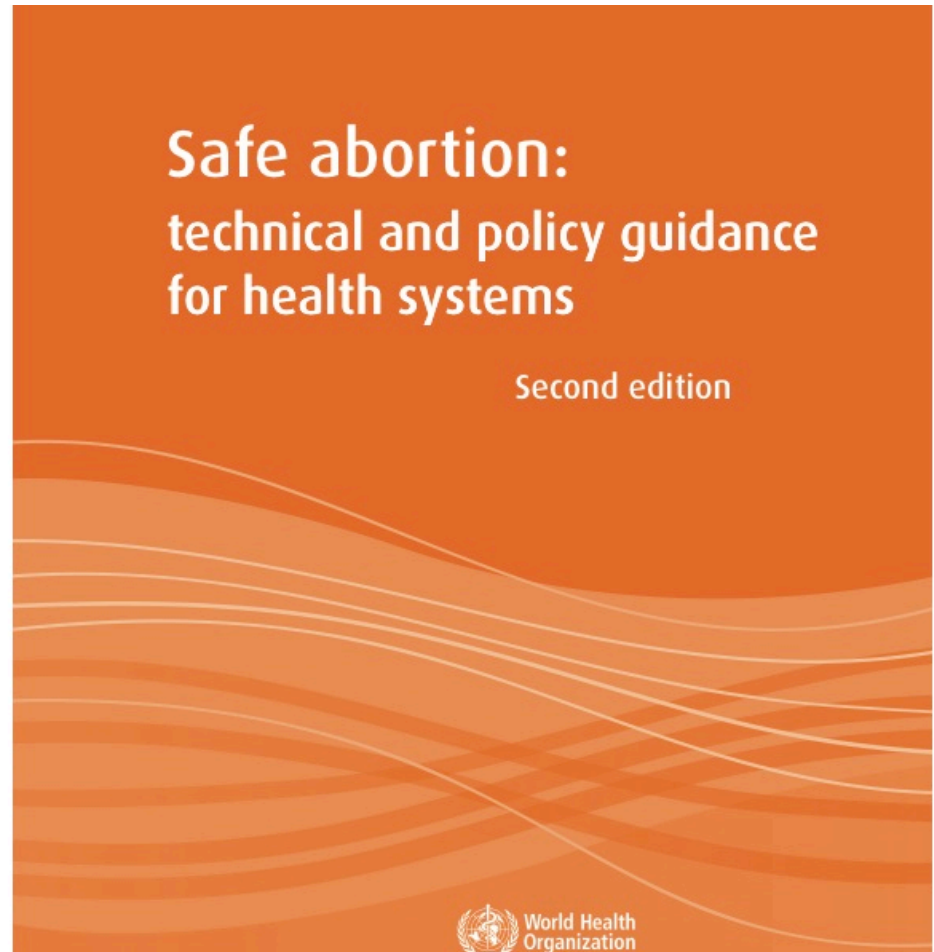
Medication vs. Aspiration Abortion

- Some jurisdictions do not differentiate between the provision of medication and aspiration abortion
- Legal authority for the specific termination method needs to be clarified before undertaking abortion provision

Requirements for APC Provision of Abortion Care

Identical to that of physician providers:

- Ability to provide care within a system of care that meets WHO guidelines for abortion services
- Access to consultation and/or referral for complex cases
- Access to emergency services if necessary



**What evidence is there that APCs
can be safe abortion providers?**

Most Recent Published Review of Studies Investigating APC Care for Abortion

- Included studies from 1986 to 2011
- Two randomized controlled trials and three prospective cohort studies
- Both medication and aspiration abortion procedures included
 - 1077 patients received medication termination
 - 2894 patients received aspiration procedures

“Limited evidence suggests that MLPs can be trained to provide first-trimester surgical (using vacuum aspiration) and medical (mifepristone and misoprostol) termination of pregnancy services *as safely and effectively as physicians.*”

The Health Workforce Pilot Project

- A non-inferiority trial of APCs providing first trimester vacuum aspiration abortion
- 11,487 early aspiration abortions completed
 - physicians (n = 5812)
 - newly trained NPs, CNMs, and PAs (n=5675)
- Abortion complications were clinically equivalent between two groups
- Supports the adoption of policies to allow these providers to perform early aspirations to expand access to abortion care

How can APCs be trained to provide abortion care?

Basic Training Principles

Similar to other abortion training programs, and in accordance with WHO guidelines, ***providers need to understand the importance of compassionate, patient-centered, and safe care*** in addition to a willingness to provide.

Basic Training Principles

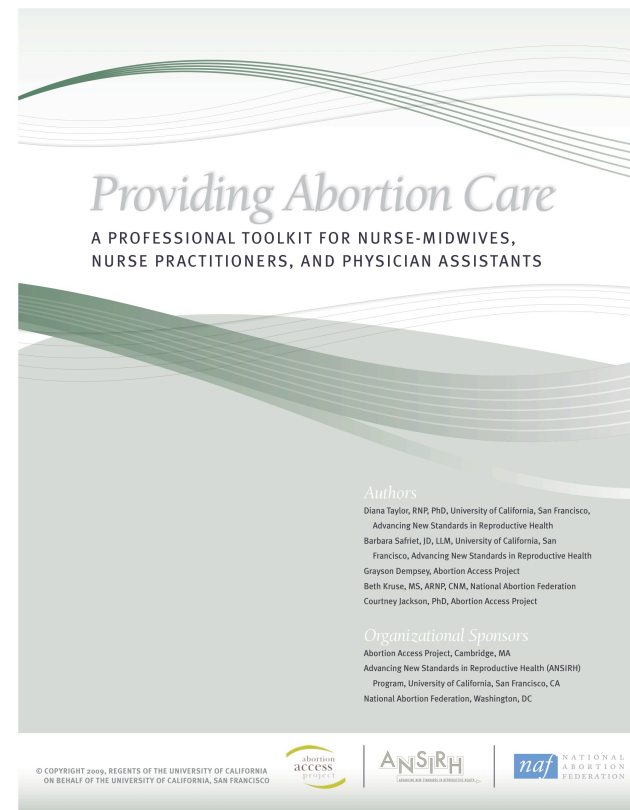
- Advanced clinical assessment, management, and evaluation skills appropriate to the abortion setting
- Access to consultation and referral as necessary
- Ability to identify deviations from normal, and respond to emergencies as necessary

Procedure-specific Skills

- Medication abortion training: includes pharmacokinetics and pharmacodynamics of abortifacient medications
- Ultrasound skill or access is preferable for use before, during, and after procedures

Prior to the Initiation of Skills Training

- Assessment of appropriate knowledge base can help to guide training to competence
- The APC Toolkit can provide information about legal issues and training materials



Principles of Training

- Aspiration training requires the opportunity to provide procedures in real time with a skilled trainer
- Trainee competence and confidence should be assessed by both the trainee and trainer throughout the process



Ensuring Continuous Quality Care

- Opportunities for ongoing training support should be available
- Participation in standardized data collection and peer review is encouraged to ensure maintenance of quality standards, and identify areas in need of refreshing

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Advanced Practice Clinicians as Abortion Providers

- APCs can expand the pool of skilled clinicians to increase access to abortion care
- APCs can provide abortion services autonomously within a system of care that is available for consultation and emergencies
- The scope of APC practice varies by legal jurisdiction, which needs to be clarified for abortion provision