

Fact Sheet: The Lack of Abortion Training and Providers in Canada

H Abortion is one of the most common medical procedures, yet medical students are not being trained to provide them. The critical shortage of doctors providing abortion care threatens to make the Morgentaler decision irrelevant.

- H Medical schools in Canada spend an average of less than 1 hour teaching about abortion throughout a four-year curriculum. Of the 10 schools, 3 dedicate fewer than 20 minutes to all aspects of abortion combined. First-trimester surgical abortion techniques are discussed in only half of Canada's medical schools.¹
- H In 3 of Canada's medical schools, the ratio of class-time dedicated to infertility and time spent on contraception is at least 4:1. In 2 schools, the ratio of Viagra time to abortion time is at least 9:1.²
- H Nationally, an average of only 17.8% of hospitals provide abortion services. Women in Nunavut and Prince Edward Island do not have access to abortion, while women in Newfoundland, New Brunswick, Manitoba, Nova Scotia, Saskatchewan, the Northwest Territories, and the Yukon have extremely limited access: between 1 and 3 hospitals in each of these provinces provide abortions.³
- H A survey of Canadian Planned Parenthood clinics shows that the biggest barrier to abortion services is travel. Thousands of women are forced to travel outside their communities to obtain abortions, a process that is time consuming, expensive, and conflicts with work and childcare. Also, women in rural areas do not have access to follow-up care.⁴
- H There have been 15,087 reported instances of violence against and/or harassment of abortion providers in the U.S. and Canada since 1977, including 7 murders and 17 attempted murders, and many instances were probably not reported.⁵ Anti-choice tactics have caused doctors and hospitals to shy away from offering abortion services, and have scared students and residents away from pursuing education in abortion training.
- H Many of today's providers are pioneers whose commitment to safe, legal abortion was shaped by having witnessed the effects of botched illegal or self-induced abortions. Younger physicians have not been faced with the specter of unsafe abortion.

¹ MSFC, 2003.

² MSFC, 2003.

³ Canadian Abortion Rights Action League, "Protecting Abortion Rights in Canada," 2003.

⁴ CARAL, 2003.

⁵ National Abortion Federation Fact Sheet, "Violence and Disruption Statistics," December 2002.