

First experiences with the abortion pill in The Netherlands

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Since the end of 1999 Mifepristone has been available on the Dutch market. In november 1999 a research project started to establish to which extent medical abortion was considered to be a useful and valuable supplement to existing care provision in the Netherlands. Also the advantages and disadvantages of medical abortion versus surgical vacuum aspiration were studied.

Abortion clients were asked about their expectations (before treatment) and their experiences (at post check-up). At the post check-up, clients were also asked to fill out the Hopkin's Symptom Checklist (HSCL), which is an objective measure for psychological and physical well-being. In total, 262 clients participated in the study (131 chose Mifepristone, 131 vacuum aspiration). The failure rate was 3.3% for medical abortion and 1.5% for surgical vacuum aspiration. Of the clients who chose Mifepristone, 80.2% were satisfied with the treatment, compared to 92.9% who had a vacuum aspiration. The most described advantage of medical abortion was the fact that no surgical procedures are necessary, the most described disadvantages were the amount of blood loss and insecurity of the time of abortion. Clients who had had a medical abortion scored significantly higher on the total scale of the HSCL, probably due to somatic side effects from the medication.