

Introduction

Western European countries have considerable variation in Abortion care access and delivery. This situation is constantly changing – often to improve access (introduction of telemedicine in France, UK and Sweden) and sometimes to block access (Poland). Working in Germany provided me with a personal insight into the mechanisms of such change in abortion care.



Working in german abortion services

- Pro Familia are a charitable provider of sexual health counselling and clinical services including abortion care
- Medical recruitment is difficult in most specialties,
- 2000 clinics offering abortion treatment were registered in 2003. Registered clinic number dropped to 1300 in 2019
- Training poorly supported by Gynaecology Society (DGOG)
- Women travel long distances to access treatment

current developments in Germany



Clinicians, lawyers, social scientists, journalists and campaigners are working to improve abortion care in Germany:

- Doctors for choice (DfC) Germany
- Arbeitskreis Frauengesundheit (AkF)
- General Practitioners (DEGAM) are part of the new Guideline Developing Group led by a Charite Professor of Gynaecology.
- The German Government funds a major study into the current situation (ELSA-Studie).

Table 1 illustrates how the situation in Germany mirrors that in the UK with a 6-8 year lag: Working together using evidence-based guidance will facilitate change.

Déjà-vu moment: Germany is well on the way of a similar process of positive change.

Conclusion

Networking is vital to develop 21st century women's reproductive healthcare – everywhere.



| TABLE 1 | GB | year | Germany | year |
|--------------------------------------|---|----------------------|---|----------------------|
| Origins of current law | Offence against the person Act | 1886 | §218 Strafgesetzbuch (StGB) | 1871 |
| | Abortion Act | 1967 | §129 §219a GDR law joined above §§: abortion remains a criminal offence – which is not punishable | 1925 1974 1995 |
| Abortion treatment Providers | BPAS / MSI / NuPAS/ national health service (NHS) | 1967 | ProFamilia FPZ Balance Berlin Some Public Hospitals 1000 Gynaecologists (of 9000 independent surgeries) | 1952 1992 |
| Public / Legal challenges | CQC inspection of clinics and signing of HSA1 | 2012 | GP convicted to £5000 fine | 2017 |
| | | | Awaiting decision of constitutional court | 2021 |
| Recruitment / training | RCOG and FSRH Special skills module (SSM) abortion care | | none at UG level except where students have demanded it part of Fetal medicine module in higher training O&G | 2021 |
| pro-choice professional organisation | Doctors for Choice, | 1976 | Arbeitsgemeinschaft Frauengesundheit (AGF) | 1993 |
| | BSACP | 2015 | Doctors for Choice Med Students for choice | 2019 |
| Publication of Clinical guidance | RCOG | 2004 2011 2019 | Arbeitsgemeinschaft der wissenschaftlichen medizinischen Fachgesellschaften (AWMF) Started work on clinical guidance, publication due April 2024 | 2021 |
| | NICE / RCOG | | | |

References

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- List of providers in Germany (Sept2021):
https://www.bundesaerztekammer.de/fileadmin/user_upload/downloads/pdf-Ordner/Liste219a/20210905_Liste_13_Abs_3_SchKG.pdf
- ProFamilia introduction:
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