Improving the quality of abortion-related care in UK Emergency Departments

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Background

- Abortion is safe and common; 1 in 3 women in the UK will have an abortion in their lifetime
- Although most abortions are uncomplicated, Emergency Department (ED) clinicians will encounter patients with post-abortion complications.
- Abortion care is not included in Emergency Medicine training, leading to a gap in clinicians' knowledge and confidence

Aim

Improve assessment and management of post-abortion complications in EDs across the UK

Methods

Development of session tailored to ED clinicians

Doctors for Choice members who are abortion providers were matched with local EDs

13 sessions ran between March-July 2026

Anonymous pre- and post-session questionnaires assessed confidence in identifying and managing complications, recognising emergencies, appropriate referrals and non-stigmatising communication



13 further sessions are planned to be delivered in other EDs

Results

Pre-course: N = 78

Post-course: N = 75

1. I feel confident recognizing when to reassure and discharge patients experiencing predictable side effects

Agree/strongly agree: 32% → 100%

2. I feel confident identifying when patients with a post-abortion complication can be referred to their abortion provider

Agree/ strongly agree: 24% → 99%

3. I feel confident identifying when patients with a post-abortion complication require treatment in ED and/or gynae referral

Agree/strongly agree: 59% → 100%

4. If I saw a patient who was pregnant but didn't want to be, I would feel confident about talking to them about abortion.

Agree/ strongly agree: 44% → 91%

'Excellent session, should be a regular part of the curriculum'

'Sensitive topic that was handled with nuance and consideration'

'Excellent presentation - covered many important aspects of this topic appropriate to us in ED'

'Really helpful in demystifying abortion care'

For full results, please scan this QR code

Conclusion

- A brief, targeted teaching session can substantially improve ED clinicians' confidence in managing post-abortion presentations and delivering non-stigmatising care.
- Embedding abortion education within Emergency Medicine training may support safer decision-making and address a gap in current provision.

Get involved!

If you would like to deliver teaching at your local ED, contact doctorsforchoiceuk@gmail.com and we will send you the teaching materials and provide guidance.