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Only 50% of CO clinicians are willing and able to counsel women on abortion

CU health experts say lack of information can jeopardize women's health and well-being

AURORA, Colo. (March 2, 2021) – Pregnant patients in Colorado may be told about parenting and adoption, but not abortion. This is according to a new study led by Kate Coleman-Minahan of the University of Colorado College of Nursing published in the [Journal of Midwifery and Women's Health](#).

“Access to abortion is a public health priority,” said Coleman-Minahan, assistant professor at the CU College of Nursing and lead author of the study. “Evidence-based and nonjudgmental counseling on all three pregnancy options (abortion, adoption and parenting) support individual autonomy and the health and well-being of pregnant patients and their families.”

While pregnant women want to know all of their options, the study found only 48% of clinicians were willing and able to give them complete, accurate and unbiased information. The staff involved included nurse practitioners, nurse midwives and physician assistants, not the doctors.

The reasons for being unwilling or unable to counsel vary. The study found some clinicians oppose abortion rights, while others' organizations don't allow them to bring it up in discussion. However, the biggest reason for withholding the information is a lack of knowledge and training. A surprising 79% of the clinicians who are unable to counsel on abortion say they don't have the experience or education to counsel women about abortion.

“The data identify a knowledge gap among Colorado clinicians and suggest a need for more training in pregnancy options counseling and abortion referrals,” said Coleman-Minahan.

The study found 53% of clinicians refer patients for abortion care and 31% refer to crisis pregnancy centers. Crisis pregnancy centers, or pregnancy resource centers, try to dissuade women from choosing abortion.

Major U.S. professional health, medical and nursing organizations recommend informed counseling so that women can make voluntary decisions and access timely abortion care. They also recommend against referring to crisis pregnancy centers.

The study was funded by the University of Colorado College of Nursing and supported by the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development University

of Colorado Population Center. The purpose of the study was to assess pregnancy options counseling and abortion referral practices using a stratified random survey of 513 advanced practice clinicians in Colorado, where the majority of counties are rural and do not have an abortion provider.

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