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Abortion provision among practicing obstetrician-gynecologists

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Abstract

Objective: To estimate prevalence and correlates of abortion provision among practicing obstetrician gynecologists (ob-gyns) in the United States.

Methods: We conducted a national probability sample mail survey of 1,800 practicing ob-gyns. Key variables included whether respondents ever encountered patients seeking abortions in their practice and whether they provided abortion services. Correlates of providing abortion included physician demographic characteristics, religious affiliation, religiosity, and the religious affiliation of the facility in which a physician primarily practices.

Results: Among practicing ob-gyns, 97% encountered patients seeking abortions, whereas 14% performed them. Female physicians were more likely to provide abortions than were male (18.6% compared with 10.6%, adjusted odds ratio 2.54, 95% confidence interval 1.57-4.08), as were those in the youngest age group, those in the Northeast or West, those in highly urban postal codes, and those who identify as being Jewish. Catholics, Evangelical Protestants, non-Evangelical Protestants, and physicians with high religious motivation were less likely to provide abortions.

Conclusion: The proportion of U.S. ob-gyns who provide abortions may be lower than estimated in previous research. Access to abortion remains limited by the willingness of physicians to provide abortion services, particularly in rural communities and in the South and Midwest.