

Q&A: Student develops website to help Canadians choose the right type of abortion

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Deciding to have an abortion is a deeply personal choice, and so is what comes next: determining the type of abortion that's best for you.

UBC Ph.D. student Kate Wahl wants to help Canadians navigate that decision. She's developed [It's My Choice](#), Canada's first interactive website aimed at helping people identify the abortion option that best fits their values and circumstances. She is also lead author of an [article](#) on the development of the decision aid now published in the *Journal of Medical Internet Research*.

Hosted by the Society of Obstetricians and Gynecologists of Canada (SOGC), the tool integrates the best available evidence on the two methods of abortion available in Canada: the abortion pill and abortion procedure. Users learn what to expect from each option, and after completing a secure and anonymous questionnaire, receive a personalized recommendation designed to support conversations with their health care provider.

Wahl developed It's My Choice together with her UBC supervisor Dr. Sarah Munro, Dalhousie University's Dr. Melissa Brooks, and a team of researchers, clinicians and patient partners. We spoke with her about the new resource.

What inspired you to create this tool?

It's My Choice is all about supporting people who have decided to have an abortion to choose the method that's right for them. We know from decades of research that both the pill and procedure are safe and effective, but they differ in other ways. For example, with the pill you can have the abortion at home or in a place of your choosing, whereas the procedure happens in a clinic. They also work and impact our bodies in different ways. We wanted to help people understand those differences and choose the best option for them.

What can people expect from the website?

You'll find a video that explains abortion choice and options in Canada, and user-friendly information on the abortion pill, procedure and how they differ. You can then answer questions about your individual preferences. For example, how important is it to you to have your abortion at home or in the place of your choosing? Based on your answers, the tool calculates which option you may prefer. At the end, you're presented with a summary of your preferences and links to resources that help you find your preferred option closer to home.

The whole tool is anonymous and we've built in other features to protect privacy, like a quick exit button and information about clearing browsing history.

Many people face barriers accessing abortion. How did this fact shape the tool?

It's so important for people to have access to sexual and [reproductive health care](#) no matter who they are or where they live in Canada. It's My Choice includes information about virtual care options for people who live in rural remote and northern communities. We've described what types of health care providers can offer care, and other places people can seek support in their communities.

This past year, we were part of a team that received a grant from Health Canada to adapt It's My Choice into French, Mandarin and Punjabi. Patients and clinicians were actually members of our design team, which helped us ensure that we used culturally inclusive imagery and language.

What's the reaction been from patients and health care providers who piloted the tool?

We [recently published](#) feedback we collected as part of our development

process, and it was very positive and encouraging. For potential patients, one important point was just making them aware of the available options—a lot of people didn't realize that a primary care provider, like a [family doctor](#) or [nurse practitioner](#), could prescribe the [abortion pill](#). They also liked that the tool was personalized to them. Health care providers have told us that the tool will help them counsel patients better. For example, a patient can complete it and then they can discuss the summary page and any questions together in the appointment.

What impact do you hope this will have for people seeking abortion care?

I hope It's My Choice supports people who have decided to have an abortion to get access to the right care for them. Like any other health care decision, the choice between the abortion procedure and pill is very personal and I hope the tool helps make that choice easier.

More information: Kate J Wahl et al, User-Centered Development of a Patient Decision Aid for Choice of Early Abortion Method: Multi-Cycle Mixed Methods Study, *Journal of Medical Internet Research* (2024). [DOI: 10.2196/48793](https://doi.org/10.2196/48793)

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