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Misoprostol

Lack of information on the use of misoprostol is very serious

Restrictions to disclosing information is a setback for medical practices and exposes women's health in Brazil.

Attendants to the last *Technical-Scientific Meeting on Medicamental Abortion in Brazil*, promoted by CCR – Comissão de Cidadania e Reprodução, in October 2009, 15 to 16, including health professionals, were absolutely astonished when faced with the problems brought to light. This proved how little information they have on the situation of misoprostol and its usage in Brazil and in the world. The first necessary steps towards the change of such landscape framed by restrictions include acknowledging the gravity of the information disclosed at the meeting and facing the inefficacy of the communication and articulation among the many actors involved.

The maladjustment between ANVISA and the technical areas of the Health Ministry is obvious. And the agency's inflexibility regarding the access to misoprostol and the disclosure of information on Prostokos even for hospitals authorized to use the medicine is at least suspicious. Orientation leaflets directed at health professionals that used to be distributed in health offices disappeared after the discontinuation of the publicity on misoprostol-based medicines such as Cytotec and Prostokos. Professionals had to seek for other information sources and started to search for studies and manuals published by NGOs, also getting in touch with experts associations. This is the landscape for the surging of one of the hugest absurdities in the misoprostol usage situation in the country: most studies on the ob/gyn usage of the medicine have been carried out with basis on Cytotec. Flasog – Federação Latinoamericana de Sociedades de Obstetrícia e Ginecologia, for example, published and distributed a manual on the use of misoprostol, but the dosages and the administration guidelines in it referred to Cytotec and not to Prostokos. Since Prostokos is the product registered by ANVISA and therefore the one available at Brazilian drugstores, the information produced disastrous results. Misusage of the medicine became frequent and many times unaccounted for by professionals and the general public, exposing them to risks of incomplete abortions and fetus malformation, among others. The almost total lack of knowledge about such questions by social movements and progressive groups nullifies their effort towards publicizing Flasog's manual and rendering services to women in situation of abortion. Not sharing this kind of information exposes the flaws in the communication among political actors. Besides that, the poor information provided by the mass media on the subject keeps a great slice of the population, from health professionals to people involved in movements defending sexual and reproductive rights - almost completely ignorant about the current discussion on the right to abortion, not to mention the situation of misoprostol usage in Brazil and in the world. This became crystal clear at the meeting, with the indignation and surprise arisen during the presentations on medicamental abortion and many other grave revelations. Amidst the debate, the lack of communication and articulation among the many progressive actors in the sexual and reproductive field comes up as a new issue. The growing pressure coming from religious and conservative groups might result from their articulation skills that lack in the actions taken by groups promoting non-restrictive policies. New strategies must be adopted in order to provide a more progressive scenario for women.