Overestimation of abortion in Colombia and other Latin American countries


Abstract

Recently, the Guttmacher Institute estimated a number of 400,400 clandestine abortions for Colombia. Because of the strong implications that such brief could have in different areas of interest, a full revision of the methodology of estimation was performed. The methodology used by the Guttmacher Institute was as follows: first, the authors estimated the losses from spontaneous and induced abortions from the opinion of 289 subjects who work in an equal number of Colombian health institutions through the opinion survey entitled "Health Facilities Survey". Subsequently, an expansive multiplier (x3, x4, x5, etc.) was applied to the numbers obtained by this survey that also emerges from a subjective opinion of another 102 respondents of the "Health Professional Survey" selected by convenience. There is no objective data based on real vital events, the whole estimate is based on imagining/numbers underlying mere opinions. Even as public opinion survey, the sampling technique introduced serious selection bias in the gathering of information. Valid epidemiological methods using standardized rates, choosing the paradigmatic cases of Chile and Spain as standard populations, it was observed that Guttmacher Institute methodology overestimates more than 9 times the complications due to induced abortion in hospital discharges and more than 18 times the total number of induced abortions. In other Latin American countries where the same methodology was applied including Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Mexico, Peru, Guatemala, and Dominican Republic, the number of induced abortions was also largely overestimated. These results call for caution with this type of reports that alarm public opinion.

Keywords Abortion, Epidemiological methods, Maternal health, Maternal mortality, Time series, Article, Colombia, Health practitioner, Health survey, Hospital discharge, Human, Induced abortion, South and Central America, Spontaneous abortion, Abortion, Induced, Female, Humans, Latin America, Pregnancy