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Induced abortions among women with migrant background in Finland 2001–2014

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Background: Vulnerable groups like immigrants are easily marginalized in the health care system. Women of migrant origin may encounter barriers in obtaining reproductive health care services. We investigated induced abortions among migrant women in Finland in 2001–2014.

Methods: The Finnish Register on Induced Abortions was linked with the Population Register on women's background characteristics. The final research data comprised of 145,993 induced abortions and 114 384 women.

Results: Women with Finnish background and born in Finland had the lowest abortion rate (8.4/1000 women aged 15–49 years). Women with migrant background had a higher rate, both those born in Finland (10.3/1000) and those born elsewhere (14.9/1000). The induced abortion rate was the highest for women from Iran (26.2/1000) and Estonia (18.9/1000).

Women born abroad had more often been pregnant at least once before the induced abortion than women born in Finland: 55.2% of them had previous pregnancies versus 39.8% of women born in Finland. Women born abroad had 1.5-fold risk for having been pregnant the same or previous year than the abortion. Compared to women born in Finland the risk for having had two or more previous induced abortions was almost two-fold for women born abroad. However, women born in Finland had a higher risk (7.7% of all induced abortions) for a late abortion after 12 gestational weeks than women born abroad (6.2%).

Non use of contraceptives before pregnancy was reported by 40% of women born in Finland and 55% of women born abroad. After the abortion, oral contraceptives and IUDs were the most common choices both for women with Finnish background (54% and 24%, respectively) and migrant women (49% and 33%, respectively).

Conclusions and significance for practice: To improve migrants' sexual and reproductive health, family planning services should focus in prevention of unwanted pregnancies among women with different immigrant backgrounds. Immigrant women may need special support when seeking abortion and when they are in need of contraception.

Key Messages:

1. Immigrant women have a higher risk for induced abortions.
2. Late induced abortions are not more common among immigrants suggesting good access to care.
3. The use of contraceptives when becoming pregnant was less common among immigrant women.

Key reference:

Malin M, Gissler M. Induced Abortions among Immigrant Women in Finland. *Finnish Journal of Ethnicity and Migration*. 2008; Vol. 3, No. 1.