



Reporte de la Reunión

El embarazo no deseado
y el aborto inducido:
Desafíos de salud pública en
Latina América y el Caribe
Public Health Challenges in
Latin America and
The Caribbean



El embarazo no deseado
y el aborto inducido:
Desafíos de salud pública en
América Latina y el Caribe



Meeting Report



Asociación Mexicana de Genética Humana

Clínica de Atención a Víctimas de Delitos Sexuales,
Hospital General de México

Consejo Nacional de Población (CONAPO)

Dirección General de Salud Reproductiva,
Secretaría de Salud

Facultad de Medicina,
Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM)

Federación Mexicana de Ginecología y Obstetricia

Iniciativa Regional sobre SIDA para América Latina
y el Caribe (SIDALAC)

Instituto Nacional de Salud Pública (INSP)

Ipas

Partners in Population and Development

Planned Parenthood Federation of America, Inc.
Family Planning de International Assistance (PPFA/FPIA)

Programa “Salud y Sociedad” del Colegio de México

Programa Latinoamericano de Capacitación e
Investigación en Reproducción Humana/
Programa Regional de Capacitación en Salud Sexual y
Reproducción (PLACIRH/PROGRESAR)

Sociedad Mexicana de Ginecología y Obstetricia

*The International Conference on Population and Development (Cairo, 1994) recommends:
“All Governments and relevant intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations
are urged to strengthen their commitment to women's health, to deal with the health impact
of unsafe abortion as a major public health concern and to reduce the recourse to
abortion through expanded and improved family-planning services.”*

*La Conferencia Internacional sobre Población y Desarrollo (Cairo, 1994) recomienda
que: “Los Gobiernos y organizaciones intergubernamentales y no gubernamentales
reconozcan el impacto que el aborto illegal tiene sobre la salud y lo encaren como un
importante problema de salud pública, reduciendo el recorso al aborto médico ante la
expansión y mejoramiento de servicios de planificación familiar”.*

Sociedad Mexicana de Ginecología y Obstetricia

Reproducción (PLACIRH/PROGRESAR)

Programa Regional de Capacitación en Salud Sexual y
Reproducción Humana/

Investigación en Reproducción Humana/

Programa Latinoamericano de Capacitación (PPFA/FPIA)

Family Planning de Interamerican Assistance (PPFA/FPIA)

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Instituto Nacional de Salud Pública (INSP)

y el Caribe (SIDALAC)

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Clinica de Atención a Víctimas de Delitos Sexuales,

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Forward

This report provides an overview of the conference "Unwanted Pregnancy and Abortion: Public Health Challenges in Latin America and the Caribbean," held in Cuernavaca, Mexico, November 12-14, 2001. The Population Council and The Alan Guttmacher Institute are pleased to have been part of this momentous event and to have had the opportunity to learn from and share information with so many colleagues throughout the region. We are particularly honored to have organized this event with the Academia Nacional de Medicina de México and to have been joined by a distinguished group of co-sponsors: Asociación Mexicana de Genética Humana; Clínica de Atención a Víctimas de Delitos Sexuales, Hospital General de México; Consejo Nacional de Población (CONAPO); Dirección General de Salud Reproductiva, Secretaría de Salud; Facultad de Medicina, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM); Federación Mexicana de Ginecología y Obstetricia; Iniciativa Regional sobre SIDA para América Latina y el Caribe (SIDALAC); Instituto Nacional de Salud Pública (INSP); Ipas; Partners in Population and Development; Planned Parenthood Federation of America, Inc./Family Planning International Assistance (PPFA/FPIA); Programa Salud y Sociedad del Colegio de México; Programa Latinoamericano de Capacitación e Investigación en Reproducción Humana/Programa Regional de Capacitación en Salud Sexual y Reproducción (PLACIRH/PROGRESAR); and Sociedad Mexicana de Ginecología y Obstetricia. Finally, this meeting would not have been possible without the generous financial support provided by the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, and The Wellcome Trust.

All presenters and meeting attendees showed remarkable commitment to the task of improving women's reproductive health. Specifically, the presence of so many researchers at this event was an inspiring testimony to the potential contribution of scientific investigation to the endeavor.

We would particularly like to recognize our colleagues at the Population Council—Charlotte Ellertson, Henry Espinoza and Abigail Norris Turner, whose hard work, creativity and organizational efforts made

the meeting a success. In addition, we wish to thank Hilda Castro, Laura Carrillo, María Fernanda Díaz de León and Claudia Vizcaino for their outstanding logistical support. From The Alan Guttmacher Institute, we thank Susan Tew for organizing the dissemination sessions, Louis Guzik and Judith Rothman for sustaining the conference web page, and Lisa Remez for drafting this document.

While this report attempts to convey the breadth of the meeting's presentations, it focuses primarily on the findings of papers made available following the conference. It does not seek to provide a detailed account of each session, but rather to give an overall sense of the information and issues discussed and debated during the three-day meeting. It does not represent the views of the Population Council, The Alan Guttmacher Institute, any of the co-sponsors, or any one presenter. Finally, it does not—and no summary could—do justice to the thought-provoking evidence presented, the rich discussions, or the collegial respect and goodwill that permeated the meeting.

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*Para ver la Lista de Participantes referirse a la página 15 de la versión en inglés.

Introduci

La conferencia "Embarrazo no deseado y el aborto inducedo: Desafíos de salud pública en América Latina y el Caribe" reunió a más de 300 científicos que investigan las consecuencias de los cuatro millones de abortos clandestinos que se realizan cada año en la región. El propósito de la conferencia fue facilitar el intercambio de información sobre tablas recientes y programas, así como ofrecer oportunidades para la creación de redes de colaboración. En los tres días de la conferencia, se hicieron 62 presentaciones orales y 31 presentaciones de póster.** Y se contó con la participación de investigadores de 24 países, de los cuales 17 pertenecen a la región de América Latina y el Caribe.

Todo tipo de investigación enfrenta ciertos obstáculos para la obtención de datos confiables, pero la recolección y diseminación de información sobre una actividad tan caragada de matices emocionales y realizada frecuentemente de manera clandestina adquiere dimensiones desafiantes. Además de presentar informes detallados sobre avances recibentes en la investigación del aborto, la conferencia subrayó la importancia de las investigaciones prácticas que se utilizan para comparar los resultados en esa materia. En los primeros días de esta reunión, se llevaron a cabo una sesión plenaria formal y presentaciones orales y de póster; el último día, se dedicó a la realización de prácticas para intercambiar con los medios de comunicación y las autoridades de salud de la región. La presentación de los resultados de las investigaciones prácticas que se realizan para adaptar la presentación de hallazgos a diferentes públicos, así como la difusión de las conclusiones de las investigaciones prácticas que se realizan para la realización de procedimientos de salud pública, es fundamental para mejorar la calidad de vida de las personas y la salud pública en general.

Introduction

The conference “Unwanted Pregnancy and Abortion: Public Health Challenges in Latin America and the Caribbean” brought together more than 300 researchers investigating the consequences of the region’s four million annual clandestine abortions. The meeting’s purpose was to facilitate the exchange of information on recent and planned work and to provide opportunities for networking. Sixty-two oral presentations and 31 poster presentations* were given over the course of the three-day meeting, which drew participants from 24 nations, including 17 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean.

All types of research entail certain obstacles in the effort to obtain reliable data, but collecting and disseminating information on this emotionally charged and often clandestine activity are especially daunting. The conference not only provided reports detailing recent developments in abortion research, but also emphasized the importance of strengthening practical tools for sharing those research results. The first two days revolved around formal plenary, oral and poster presentations, while the final day involved a hands-on practicum on disseminating research results effectively, interacting with the media and tailoring findings to different audiences.

Opening remarks from representatives of the Population Council, the Mexican National Academy of Medicine, the Mexican National Institute of Public Health and the World Health Organization confirmed the need for reliable and scientifically sound information as public discussion of abortion comes to the fore. Such objective and irrefutable evidence is essential to inform policymakers and researchers who are addressing the linked problems of unsafe abortion, unwanted pregnancy, gender equity, quality of care and poverty.

* References are not included here since in many cases, research findings were presented pre-publication, presentations were not accompanied by a formal document, or findings were deemed confidential due to the nature of the subject matter.

Summary of Plenary

Plenary speakers began the meeting by providing an impressive overview of the legal climate in Latin America and the Caribbean, where at least 6,000 women die each year from complications associated with clandestine abortion. They detailed recent legal reforms that have helped women, including depenalization of abortion in Guyana in 1995, as well as those measures that have inflicted further harm, such as passage of legislation in El Salvador in 1997 and in Chile in 2000 that criminalized all abortions, even those needed to save a woman's life. Despite these efforts of abortion opponents, however, legal restrictions have not reduced rates of abortion. The opposite, in fact, is true. The estimated rate of abortion—and, by definition, of illegal abortion—for countries such as Brazil, Colombia and Chile is generally twice as high as rates for the United States and Canada, where safe, legal abortions are available.

Plenary speakers described clinical advances in abortion provision, which have made the procedure simpler, safer and less expensive. Some of the recent developments in surgical abortion include improvements in: pregnancy detection and dating (through ultrasound); priming of the cervix (with misoprostol); infection prevention (through prophylactic antibiotics); pain control (through use of paracervical blocks and conscious sedation); new surgical techniques (including the use of flexible cannulas and hand-held suction devices); and confirmation of completeness of the procedure (through ultrasonography and review of tissue).

Presenters also discussed advances in medical methods of abortion, including the advantages and disadvantages of the use of the antiprogestrone mifepristone, which, when used in combination with the E₁ prostaglandin analog misoprostol, offers women an additional safe option for early pregnancy termination. Women have another nonsurgical option in the inexpensive antimetabolite methotrexate (also typically used with misoprostol), although the regimen does not produce equally high success rates nor is it as acceptable to patients as the mifepristone-misoprostol regimen (for example, methotrexate abortions take longer than mifepristone abortions). Despite these advancements, speakers emphasized that the most important elements to improving access to safe abortion involve objectively

examining the causes and consequences of unwanted pregnancy; paying appropriate attention to women's comfort, convenience, choice and cost; and examining the concept of "wantedness" (or "unwantedness") in the specific legal, cultural, and social context of Latin America and the Caribbean.

The Minister of Health of Guyana, the South American country that legalized abortion in 1995, shared valuable lessons from Guyana's campaign for legal reform. That campaign was evidence-based, used a public-health focus and employed simple tactics, such as newspaper cartoons with easy-to-understand captions. Most importantly, the campaign had the necessary political leadership and backing. The Minister noted some of the provisions that, in his opinion, led to approval of the revised law by Guyana's legislature—a politically persuasive title (recognizing the need to preserve the sanctity of life and the dignity of women by eliminating illegal abortions); permission for health professionals who are not physicians to perform abortions; mandated transparent monitoring; a requirement that women undergo a counseling protocol before the procedure; and the appointment of an advisory board comprising religious, legal and medical professionals. Although fears that the law would encourage an increase in the number of abortions have proved unfounded, the Minister emphasized the need to continue to focus on implementation issues and accessibility of services. He stressed that continued leadership is particularly vital to ensure that abortion services remain available in the public sector, that the private sector complies with counseling and other requirements, that physicians are adequately trained and that all complications are carefully monitored. A final presentation reinforced these points through an 11-country analysis of strategies that advocated increased access to abortion.

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Resumen de las Sesiones

India) recomendaban que los prestadores reconocieran Colombia, Cuba y Brasil, y una sobre hombres de la mascuinita (tres sobre varones Latinoamericanos de Todas las presentaciones tocantes a la perspectiva "crimen", echo que tiene toda faceta de su vivencia. ha experimentado un aborto inducido ha cometido un latinoamericana (con excepción de las cubanas) que socioeconómicos y culturales, casi toda mujer rango de individuos de diferentes ambiciones rara vez esta categoría cubre necesariamente un amplio Aunque esta descripción de los hombres sobre el procedimiento. las perspectivas de las mujeres sobre el aborto, incluyendo experiencias de las mujeres con el aborto, incluyendo La segunda vertiente temática se dedicó a las

y viabilidad de usar solo misoprostol para inducir un Los presentadores hablaron también de la seguridad "interrupción médica individual del embarazo." "gandores" fueron, "aborto medicamentoso," e terminos en español. Sin embargo, los términos tanto, diferentes protocolos para posibles México y Nicaragua reveló que estos profesionales están poco familiarizados con protocolos específicos con grupos focales de personal médico en Honduras, termino en inglés, "medical abortion". Su investigación encontró una traducción al español del Un conferencista describió la labor que realizó para de 63 días.

ALABORTO

TEMARIO B: EXPERIENCIAS INDIVIDUALES RELACIONADAS

contempladas por la ley) tenían acceso a estos servicios. (i.e., que su aborto sea una de las excepciones que las mujeres elegibles desde el punto de vista legal del embarazo en condiciones seguras, para garantizar sobre los procedimientos para la terminación quirúrgica enfasis en que se debe contar con amplios conocimientos promover este método en la región. Asimismo, hizo completar un uso de la aspiración endometrial para prevalencia del uso de la aspiración endometrial para finalmente, el último expositor habló de la anestesia local o general) y de la necesidad de preferencia por el método de manejo del dolor utilizada en el estudio encontrado que las mujeres experimentaron creciente para simbolizar dolor en aumento). El estudio encontró que las mujeres de adaptar nueva escala analógica visual (que utilizó circulos durante un aborto quirúrgico examinó el valor de una preferencias de las mujeres para el manejo del dolor. Mimbai, India, la investigación realizada sobre las consignas, con más estudios) sobre el aborto. En escenarios regidos por leyes más liberales (y de en países en las de desarrrollo, fuera de la región, y de entregar de hallazgos de investigaciones realizadas de asistente a la conferencia tuvieron la oportunidad misoprostol para este fin convalecia ciertos riesgos. como se puede conseguir en el mercado negro, fuera protocolo establecer dosis recomendada. Sin embargo, protocolos y mujeres, a pesar de la ausencia de un prestadores es una práctica relativamente común entre las presentaciones sugerían que usar este

TEMARIO: AVANCES CLÍNICOS

- Las presentaciones díarias se dividieron en cinco vertientes temáticas:
 - Avances clínicos en materia de aborto; Experiencias individuales relacionadas al aborto;
 - Avances clínicos en materia de económicos, acitudes y prevalencia;
 - Investigación de ciencias sociales en aborto;
 - Materias de aborto: conocimientos, actitudes y prevalencia;
 - Política pública relacionada con el aborto, y papel del aborto en los servicios de salud reproducción.

Resumen de

Summary of

Each day's presentations were divided into five thematic tracks:

- clinical advances in abortion;
- individuals' experiences with abortion;
- social science research on abortion: knowledge, attitudes and prevalence;
- abortion-related public policy; and
- the role of abortion in reproductive health services.

TRACK A—CLINICAL ADVANCES

This group of presentations focused on advances in clinical care, specifically on the challenge of adapting the newer medical regimens, including the commonly used mifepristone-misoprostol protocol, to the actual situations in many developing countries.

Presenters provided a review of ongoing mifepristone trials in the United States and detailed several evidence-based alternatives to the protocol that is currently approved by the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA). These alternatives provide women with additional health choices without compromising the medical method's safety or efficacy. They include providing a lower, and therefore less expensive, dose of mifepristone (200 mg instead of 600 mg); offering vaginal administration of a higher dose of misoprostol (800 µg vaginally instead of 400 µg orally); taking misoprostol any time from one to three days after mifepristone; taking misoprostol at home instead of in the clinic; and extending the gestational age limit for the procedure (from 49 days since a woman's last menstrual period to up to 63 days).

Another presenter described his work to find an appropriate Spanish-language translation for the English term "medical abortion." His focus-group research with medical personnel in Honduras, Mexico and Nicaragua revealed only limited familiarity with specific protocols and therefore few suggestions for possible terminologies. The "winners," however, were "aborto medicamentoso" and "interrupción medicamentosa del embarazo."

Presenters also discussed the safety and feasibility of using misoprostol alone to induce abortion. Current research suggests that such off-label use, despite the lack of a standard protocol or recommended dose, is relatively common among both providers and women. Its unregulated availability on the black market, however, can make such use risky.

Attendees also heard research findings from developing countries outside the region, including those with more liberal abortion laws (and therefore, more research). Research conducted in Mumbai, India, on women's preferences for pain management during surgical abortion investigated the value of a new visual analog scale (using increasing sizes of circles to symbolize increasing pain). This study found that women had a strong preference for type of pain management (local or general anesthesia) and were usually highly satisfied with their choice.

Finally, the last presenter discussed the prevalence of the use of vacuum aspiration for completion of spontaneous abortion, and the need for promotion of this method throughout the region. The presenter emphasized that widespread knowledge of safe surgical abortion procedures is needed if services are to be available to all women who are legally eligible (i.e., the abortion falls into one of the exceptions allowed by law).

TRACK B—INDIVIDUALS' EXPERIENCES WITH ABORTION

The second thematic track was devoted to women's experiences with abortion, and also covered men's perspectives on abortion. Although this category necessarily covers a broad range of individuals in different socioeconomic and cultural settings, nearly every Latin American woman (Cubans excepted) who has had an induced abortion has committed a "crime", a fact that colors every facet of her experience. All presentations on men's perspectives—three on Latin American men (from Colombia, Cuba, and Brazil) and one on Indian men—recommended that providers recognize the many roles that male partners may play in the abortion process—in decisions related to contraception and pregnancy, in post abortion care, and in influencing public opinion and policy reform. Data from a small-scale survey of Colombian men who accompanied their partners to the clinic suggested

ESTUDIO DE INVESTIGACIÓN DE CIENTÍFICAS SOCIALES EN MATERIA DE ABORTO: CONOCIMIENTOS, ACTITUDES Y PREVALÉNCIA

Four presentations investigated adolescents' experiences with abortion. Of these, three presented data in which adolescents who had either abortions or miscarriages were compared with those who carried their pregnancies to term. One presenter described data collected in Ceará, Brazil; she cited a need for stronger emotional support for adolescents who decided to abort, since these young women took a longer time than their peers who decided to give birth to reach the same level of self-esteem. The final two presentations detailed a case-control study of Chilean adolescents, in which the most commonly cited reason for seeking an abortion was problems with parents (39%), followed by feeling unready to become a parent (33%). The last presenter also emphasized data from psychological screening instruments that pointed to the need for mental health counseling, since both adolescents who miscarried and those who aborted reported higher levels of anxiety than those who gave birth, and the likelihood of depression was highest among those who aborted.

TRACK C—SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH ON ABORTION: KNOWLEDGE, ATTITUDES AND PREVALENCE

The social sciences track included presentations on abortion opinion polls, the frequency of abortion and methodological advances in measuring rates of induced abortion. The general trends indicate that instead of supporting broad legalization of abortion in any circumstance, most people favor legalization with certain limitations. For example, three papers presented results from public opinion research conducted in Argentina and Mexico. Important common findings in these countries included the relatively low level of public knowledge about national abortion laws (for example, 44% of Mexicans mistakenly thought that abortion was illegal in all circumstances) and the surprisingly high level of agreement that abortion should be legal in some circumstances. Analysis of a Mexican survey conducted during 2000, a nationally

TRACK C—SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH ON ABORTION: KNOWLEDGE, ATTITUDES AND PREVALENCE

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representative survey on abortion knowledge and attitudes in that country, showed that large differentials in approval existed by urban or rural residence, and that an overwhelming majority, 95%, thought that the public should be consulted on laws related to abortion. Multivariate analysis of the adolescents and young adults who participated in that survey showed that young people's religious and political party affiliations were not associated with their opinions on abortion.

Two presentations dealt specifically with the challenges posed by gathering reliable data on a highly sensitive, and often illegal, stigmatized behavior. One report investigated which of four methodologies—face-to-face questionnaire, random-response technique, self-administered questionnaire or audio computer-assisted self-interview (ACASI)—yielded the most accurate measurement of induced abortion (to be utilized in a future national prevalence survey in Mexico). The methodology that consistently outperformed the others was the random-response technique. Another study conducted in Campinas, Brazil, looked at how the wording of questions affects the accuracy of participants' responses. The researcher reported that women tended to deny having had an abortion when asked directly, and that they were unclear about whether drinking teas or taking medicines to "bring on a period" constituted an abortion.

Three additional presentations reported data on health professionals' views of abortion and of the women who choose to have one. Traditional nurse midwives in Morelos, Mexico, who espoused staunchly conservative views on women's societal roles, strongly condemned women who sought ways to terminate unwanted pregnancies. However, the same midwives acknowledged that the (legal) process of "menstrual regulation" avoids such strong moral censure, even though it may overlap somewhat with abortion.

A presentation of survey data from Mexico City medical residents underscored a persistent problem throughout the region: Many physicians who agree that public health facilities have an obligation to provide legal abortions nonetheless refuse to actually perform

TRACK D—ABORTION-RELATED PUBLIC POLICY

Similarly, only half of obstetrics professors and students surveyed in a Peruvian study said they would themselves perform an abortion if the procedure were legalized, although most of the sample believed that all obstetricians should know how to perform, and be authorized to perform, uterine vacuum aspiration to treat incomplete abortion. Finally, a survey of 467 Argentinean obstetrician-gynecologists found that a solid majority (79%) agreed that depenalization would lower maternal mortality, but nearly the same proportion (74%) asserted that women presenting with complications from illegal induced abortions should be reported to the police.

The challenge of accurately assessing the prevalence of this socially and legally restricted procedure has spurred the development of numerous innovative methodologies. One presentation focused on a recent attempt to estimate abortion prevalence in Peru. That study used information from 103 "experts" on the proportion of abortion patients requiring hospitalization to calculate a multiplier for the total annual number of induced abortions. The experts agreed that the widespread use of prostaglandins such as misoprostol (easily obtainable in Peruvian pharmacies) has greatly reduced the frequency and severity of abortion complications. (For example, they cited far fewer cases of infection and uterine perforation caused by women inserting sharp objects into their uterus.) This reduced probability of complications (from 47% of abortions in 1994 to 40% in 2001) means that 14% of abortion patients (instead of 21% in 1994) require hospitalization. The resulting multiplier of seven yields a current prevalence of 350,000 abortions each year in Peru.

Another presentation focused on efforts to develop new measures of abortion that would be more comprehensible and compelling to policymakers and the public than the ones currently being used. A new calculation, which focuses on “lifetime abortion risk,” would estimate how many women in a cohort of 1,000 are likely to have ever had an abortion by age 44. The resulting numbers clearly demonstrate to nonexperts that abortion is a major public health problem rather than an issue that affects only a minority of women.

TEMA RIO D: POLÍTICA PÚBLICA, RELACIONADA CON EL ABORTO

para desarrollar nuevas mediciones del aborto que pudieran ser más inteligibles y persuasivas para los diseñadores de políticas y el público en general que las que se utilizan actualmente. Un nuevo cálculo, basado en el riesgo de aborto a lo largo de la vida", daría como resultado el número de mujeres dentro de una cohorte de 1,000 que probablemente hayan tenido un aborto antes de los 44 años de edad. Las cifras obtenidas demuestran claramente a las personas no versadas en el tema que el aborto es un importante problema de salud pública y no un inconveniente que afecta exclusivamente a unas cuantas mujeres.

The fourth thematic track included discussions of national policies toward abortion within Latin America and the Caribbean. In a presentation on the economic costs of abortion on the island nation of Trinidad and Tobago, one researcher extrapolated 1999 complications data from the private sector to estimate that \$5,767,000 USD in public-sector costs would be needed to treat complications of induced abortion. An overview of the abortion legislation in Brazil, the country that accounts for nearly one-quarter of the clandestine abortions in the region, cited incremental progress toward legislative reform in a political environment in which few politicians risk discussing abortion. A pending Brazilian law (endorsed in 1997, but not yet enacted) would require the public health system to provide abortions allowable under Brazilian law.

Another presentation described Cuba's abortion policies, which are diametrically opposed to the policies of nearly all other countries in the region. Because of the nonrestrictive nature of these laws, the health and social costs of unsafe, illegal abortion for this island nation are much reduced. Cuba's extraordinarily high rate of legal abortion (roughly 78 per 1,000 women aged 15–44), however, drains the island's already scarce public health resources. A second presentation reported that—as in many other countries—Cuban couples regulate fertility using both contraceptives and abortion.

More couples report use of both contraception and abortion than exclusive use of contraceptives (61% vs. 37%). The next presentation reported the results of a comparative analysis of abortion laws in Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Cuba and Puerto Rico. Using the unique case of Puerto Rico, where U.S. law applies to a society that faces many of the same cultural barriers as other parts of the region, the presenter demonstrated that legality does not guarantee access to or quality of abortion services. The report revealed widespread social censure that perpetuates a clandestine climate; and, as is the case throughout much of the United States, no

La cuarta vertiente temática incluyó un examen de las políticas nacionales en materia de aborto, en América Latina y el Caribe. En una presentación sobre los costos económicos del aborto en Trinidad y Tobago, una investigación extrapoló información sobre la cifra de mujeres que el sector público requiere para cumplir con las leyes de aborto en Brasil, país que contiene casi un cuarto del total de los abortos clandestinos de la región, reveló avancesgraduales encamimados hacia la reforma legislativa en un ambiente en que poco se artesgan a discutir el aborto. Por otra parte, en ese mismo país, existe una ley (aprobada en 1997) pero no promulgada todavía) que exigeña que el sistema de salud pública ofrezca servicios de aborto a todos los demás países de la región. Por las vías de casti todos los demás países de la región. Por la naturaleza no restrictiva de esas leyes, los costos sociales elevada tasa de abortos legales en Cuba han reducido considerablemente. Sin embargo, la muy alta de saldo del aborto ilegal en este país se aproximaadamente 78 de cada 1,000 mujeres de 15-44 años de edad absorbe los casos recurrentes de salud pública de la isla. Otra presentación informó que en Cuba tan solo los anticongéptivos como el aborto para regular la fecundidad. Se encuentra que hay más parejas que usan anticoncepción (61% vs. 37%). El siguiente expositor presentó los resultados de un análisis comparativo de las leyes sobre aborto en América Latina y el Caribe. En una presentación sobre los costos nacionales en materia de aborto, en República Dominicana, Cuba y Puerto Rico.

Sin embargo, las partes también reconocían que el proceso (legal) de "regularización mensurada" evita la cesura moral tan estética, aunque dicha regularización plantea tener elementos comunes con el aborto legalizado entre médicos residentes de la ciudad de México que pusieron en evidencia un problema persistente, observado en toda la región: aunque mucha medicina coincidía en que clínicas y hospitales públicos tienen la obligación de proporcionar servicios de aborto legal, se rehusan a efectuar el procedimiento. De igual manera, sólo la mitad de los docentes y estudiantes de medicina coincidían en que clínicas y hospitales públicos deben realizar una misma proporción de abortos legales que las mujeres que desean tener un aborto ilegal de acuerdo a sus preferencias. La cifra de abortos legales que las mujeres que desean tener un aborto ilegal de acuerdo a sus preferencias es menor que la cifra de abortos legales que las mujeres que desean tener un aborto ilegal de acuerdo a sus preferencias.

LEMARÍO E-SERVICIOS DE SALUD
REPRODUCTIVA Y ABORTO

A partir del caso único que representa Puerto Rico, donde leyes estadounidenses se aplican a una sociedad en la que se logró identificar a mujeres con altos niveles de violencia familiar intensiva, centrada en el control sexual y el abuso de las mujeres en el matrimonio, a medida que las autoridades utilizan instrumentos de coerción para obligar a las mujeres a vivir en el matrimonio. Los servicios de salud reproductiva y el aborto, que son fundamentales para la salud de las mujeres, están siendo limitados por la legislación que prohíbe el aborto y que impone restricciones drásticas sobre el acceso a los servicios de salud reproductiva. Esto ha llevado a una situación en la que las mujeres tienen que viajar a otros países o Estados Unidos para obtener servicios de salud reproductiva. El informe revela que existe una generación de mujeres que nació en el matrimonio y que no tiene acceso a servicios de salud reproductiva ni a la educación que necesitan para vivir una vida digna. El informe también destaca la importancia de garantizar el derecho a la salud reproductiva y a la educación para todas las mujeres, sin importar su situación socioeconómica o su condición legal. El informe finaliza con recomendaciones para mejorar las políticas y prácticas de salud reproductiva en Puerto Rico y en todo el país.

Finally, three presentations considered new and evolving prenatal diagnostic technologies that might affect abortion law and policy in the region. One presentation investigated the sometimes surprising views of geneticists and judges involved in the issue, who appear to grant approval for abortion in some cases of severe fetal abnormality. According to results of a survey of 69 Mexican geneticists, 93% supported the recent Mexico City legislative initiative to depenalize abortion in cases of severe fetal abnormalities. In a small survey in São Paulo, Brazil, 69% of couples whose prenatal exam revealed severe deformity opted for termination, a decision that was unaffected by socioeconomic status. Lastly, among 219 cases in which São Paulo couples applied for judicial consent to abort a gravely affected fetus, the original opinion allowing the abortion was denied in over one-quarter (28%) of cases.

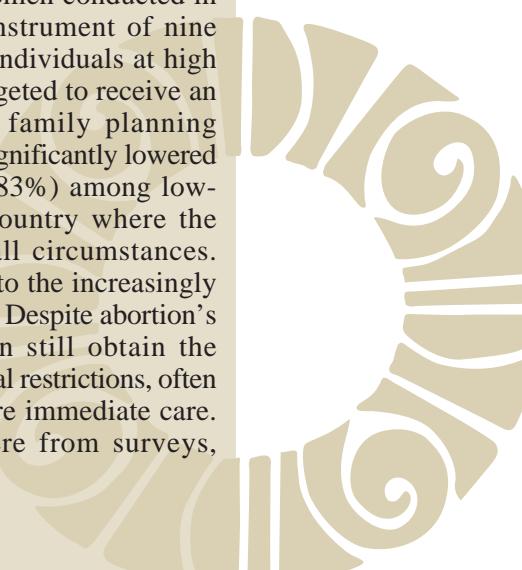
TRACK E—REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH SERVICES AND ABORTION

The final track focused on the all-important link between reproductive health services and abortion—that is, how high-quality contraceptive and family planning services can prevent women from needing an abortion in the first place. The presentations in this track also investigated the meaning of “good” postabortion care in the context of clandestine, often incomplete abortion. A study involving nearly 3,000 women conducted in Santiago, Chile, used a simple instrument of nine variables to successfully identify individuals at high risk of abortion, who were then targeted to receive an intensive, community-centered, family planning intervention. The full intervention significantly lowered the abortion rate (by as much as 83%) among low-income, high-risk women in a country where the procedure is now illegal under all circumstances.

Four other papers were devoted to the increasingly important field of postabortion care. Despite abortion's illegal status, millions of women still obtain the procedure, which, because of the legal restrictions, often results in complications that require immediate care. Three of these presentations were from surveys,

including a cross-sectional survey of patients and providers at a Managua, Nicaragua, hospital; a survey of 323 Peruvian women that assessed the sustainability of a postabortion care intervention in a Lima, Peru hospital; and a survey of providers in Peru, Bolivia and Ecuador. The fourth presentation provided an overview of lessons learned from existing postabortion services throughout the developing world.

All four presentations emphasized training of health professionals as a way of providing more comprehensive postabortion care and of reducing the need for subsequent abortion. The revised health delivery "package" would combine incomplete abortion services with family planning services, for example, by integrating manual vacuum aspiration (MVA) into regular obstetrics and gynecology services. A final recommendation included the suggestion that neither operating rooms nor general anesthesia are necessary for most postabortion care, so services can be successfully set up in rural areas where the need may be greater.



Disseminating Research

A central focus throughout the meeting was the role that rigorous research plays in informing the policy process and public discussion related to unwanted pregnancy and abortion. High-quality research can be a powerful tool to ensure that laws and policies in place or under consideration are fair, objective and evidence-based.

Yet, to be influential, research findings must also be effectively synthesized, disseminated and defended. The third day of the meeting, therefore, was devoted exclusively to hands-on training in dissemination of research findings, media relations and public education. Guest faculty focused presentations on:

- shaping public opinion in the debate about abortion,
 - presenting and defending research findings in the media-case studies from Colombia and Mexico,
 - communicating with the media,
 - creating and implementing a communications plan and
 - advocacy strategies

Two presentations began the day-long workshop on communication and application of research findings. A Costa Rican journalist focused on sexual and reproductive health issues in the media in the first presentation. She described the difficulties facing editors and journalists in the Latin American region, and the challenges and opportunities that tackling these controversial topics can present. However, she also stressed that these issues are highly newsworthy, that media coverage can be very influential and that it is worth the effort to work with journalists to ensure accurate coverage.

The second presentation, by an international reproductive rights advocate and expert in communications, focused on practical ways to confront challenges and opportunities and the benefits from doing so. She emphasized the importance of preparing for all presentations and media interviews by determining the main point or research finding to convey and making sure that it is communicated with conviction at least once. She also made clear that no matter how experienced a researcher or advocate is, presentations and media interviews are by their nature very stressful and are made more so by the controversial nature of the issues surrounding unwanted pregnancy and

abortion. Nonetheless, there is great satisfaction from conveying essential knowledge to key audiences and from airing differences of opinion.

In the second session of the day, presenters from Colombia and Mexico led a discussion of their own experiences with communicating research findings and the associated advantages, pitfalls and lessons learned.

The day concluded with hands-on training workshops devoted to developing and implementing research-centered communication strategies. These specifically covered how to interact with a potentially unfriendly media, and how to defend and promote accurate information related to sensitive issues such as unintended pregnancy and abortion.

Throughout the highly interactive sessions, participants emphasized the value of sharing research findings with opinion leaders, media organizations, policymakers and wider audiences. Researchers and presenters acknowledged that being clear and realistic in setting goals, being sensitive to political and cultural realities, and knowing and relating research findings to priority interests and to the concerns of potential audiences are critical for good communication. Experts emphasized tips, such as concentrating on a few key points and repeating them in a variety of formats and networks. Finally, presenters stressed that it is critical to present the methodological approaches behind research findings, to anticipate questions and develop appropriate answers, and to infuse presentations with an understanding of the relationship between research, the actual lives of women, men and children, and communities.

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níticos, y las comunidades.

A lo largo de sesiones caracterizadas por una gran interactividad, los participantes destacaron el valor de compartir hallazgos de investigación con líderes de opinión, organizaciones de medios, diseñadores de políticas y públicos más amplios. Investigadores y presentadores reconocieron que establecer metas claras y realistas, mostrar sensibilidad hacia realidades políticas y culturales, y enterrarse y relajacionar hallazgos de investigación con intereses prioritarios de buena comunicación. Los expertos hicieron variaciones en las estrategias y recursos críticos de una de publicas potenciales son factores que impulsan la recomendación de las comunicaciones, entre ellas concientrarse en unos cuantos puntos clave y repetirlos, utilizarando para ello diferentes formatos y redes. Por último, recalcaron la importancia crítica de presentar los resultados de metodologías subyacentes a los resultados de la investigación, anticiparse a las preguntas y preparar respuestas adecuadas, e influir en las presentaciones económicas sobre la relación que existe entre la labor de investigación y las empresas.

En la segunda sesión del día, expositores de Colombia y México examinaron sus propias experiencias en cuanto a la comunicación de hallazgos de investigación, así como sus ventajas, riesgos y lecciones aprendidas. El día concluyó con talleres de capacitación práctica, dirigidos al desarrollo e implementación de estrategias de comunicación centradas en la investigación. Dicho taller fue moderado por expertos en el tema y promovió interacciones entre los participantes. Los resultados fueron muy positivos, con temas sensibles como el embargo de Estados Unidos y la situación política en Venezuela, así como la situación económica en Argentina y Brasil.

ello se debía determinar el principio fundamental que al menos en una ocasión se cumpliera con convicción. Por otra parte, hizo patente que independientemente de la experiencia del investigador(a) o defensor(a), las presentaciones y entrevistas con los medios son por naturaleza muy estresantes debido a lo controvertido de los temas que rodean el embarazo no deseado y el aborto. Aun así, transmitir conocimientos esenciales a públicos clave y ventilar diferencias de opinión es muy difícil.

- **comunicaciones, y**
 - Dos de estas presentaciones se incluiron con un taller de un día de duración sobre comunicación y aplicación de resultados de investigación. Una periodista costarricense se abocó al tratamiento de cuestiones de salud sexual y reproducción en los medios, en la primera edición y periodistas en la región Latinoamericana, así como los retos y oportunidades que se plasdan presentar al público y que vale la pena recordar estos temas recién mucha atención subrayó también que estos temas reciben un gran interés de los medios, que su cobertura puede ejercer una verdadera influencia en el público y que dicha cobertura traspasar con periodistas para asegurar que dicha cobertura sea precisa.
- **Estrategias de promoción y difusión.**
 - La segunda presentación, que estuvo a cargo de una defensora de derechos reproducidos a escala internacional que a la vez es experta en comunicación, se centró en formas prácticas para enfrentar retos y oportunidades, y los beneficios que ello conlleva. Subrayó la importancia de prepararse para toda presentación y entrevisita con los medios y que para ello se deben tener en cuenta las diferencias entre la cultura de los medios y la cultura popular, así como las estrategias de comunicación que se utilizan en diferentes países y culturas. La tercera presentación, que estuvo a cargo de una periodista que trabaja en un medio de comunicación importante en Costa Rica, se centró en las estrategias de comunicación que se utilizan en los medios para informar sobre temas de salud sexual y reproductiva, así como las estrategias de comunicación que se utilizan para informar sobre temas de salud mental y salud emocional. La periodista destacó la importancia de utilizar lenguaje sencillo y directo, así como de utilizar imágenes y ejemplos para ilustrar conceptos complejos. También mencionó la importancia de establecer una relación de confianza con los medios y de trabajar en equipo para lograr resultados positivos. La cuarta presentación, que estuvo a cargo de una periodista que trabaja en un medio de comunicación importante en Costa Rica, se centró en las estrategias de comunicación que se utilizan para informar sobre temas de salud sexual y reproductiva, así como las estrategias de comunicación que se utilizan para informar sobre temas de salud mental y salud emocional. La periodista destacó la importancia de utilizar lenguaje sencillo y directo, así como de utilizar imágenes y ejemplos para ilustrar conceptos complejos. También mencionó la importancia de establecer una relación de confianza con los medios y de trabajar en equipo para lograr resultados positivos.

- El foco central de la conferencia fue el papel que juega la investigación rigurosa en la provisión de información para el diseño de políticas y la discusión pública del embarazo no deseado y del aborto. La investigación de alta calidad puede ser una poderosa herramienta para garantizar que leyes y políticas vigentes o basadas en evidencia.
Con todo, para que los hallazgos de investigación sean un factor de influencia se deben sintetizar, diseminar y difundir con efectividad. Por lo tanto, el tercer día de la reunión se dedicó exclusivamente a la capacitación de las autoridades de salud en las estrategias de investigación que permitan la formulación de políticas y la provisión de servicios de calidad que respondan a las necesidades de las personas.
En la conferencia se presentaron resultados de estudios de caso de Colombia y México, así como comunicados a los medios de comunicación en los medios (estudios de investigación en los medios) y presentaciones de los hallazgos de investigación en los medios (estudios de caso).
La conferencia de la ONU sobre el aborto, que se realizó en Nueva York en 1994, marcó un hito importante en la promoción de los derechos de las mujeres y las niñas. En la conferencia se establecieron objetivos para la protección de las mujeres y las niñas en todo el mundo, así como se promovió la igualdad entre los géneros y se fomentó la participación de las mujeres en la toma de decisiones.
La conferencia también puso en relieve la importancia de la investigación en la formulación de políticas y la provisión de servicios de calidad. Se enfatizó la necesidad de que las autoridades de salud se basaran en evidencia científica y técnica para tomar decisiones informadas y responsables.
En conclusión, la conferencia de la ONU sobre el aborto fue un evento histórico que marcó un hito importante en la promoción de los derechos de las mujeres y las niñas. Fue un paso importante hacia la igualdad entre los géneros y la protección de las mujeres y las niñas en todo el mundo.

Resultados de Diseñación de

Reconocer los diferentes papeles que juegan mujeres y hombres en el aborto es crítico. Negar a las mujeres el derecho a recibir servicios de aborto es una demostación tangible de desigualdad de género que impide la igualdad entre las personas. Los hombres que se oponen al aborto tienen que explicar por qué las mujeres no tienen el derecho a elegir si quieren tener un hijo o no. La respuesta más común es que las mujeres no tienen la responsabilidad de educar a sus hijos. Esta respuesta es incorrecta porque las mujeres tienen la responsabilidad de educar a sus hijos, pero no tienen la responsabilidad de tener hijos. La responsabilidad de tener hijos es de los padres, no de las mujeres.

- La capacitación de profesionales de la salud debe incluir la discusión del tratamiento individualizado de mujeres que entran en embarazo o deseado. La complejidad de los motivadores sociales económicos subyacentes a la decisión de interrumper una maternidad debe ser entendida y bien valorada por parte de los proveedores de atención médica. Una consecuencia postaborto y el manejo de complicaciones críticas, de los presentadores. Los profesionales de la salud se encuentran en la línea frontal del tratamiento de complicaciones derivadas del aborto y tienen la responsabilidad de brindar atención médica de calidad a través de la participación profesional, académica y en necesaria medida en la atención postaborto y el manejo de complicaciones graves. Los profesionales de la salud deben proteger su salud y bienestar. Por otra parte, dichos profesionales son importantes portavoces en los debates éticos y filosóficos que rodean al aborto, en los debates profesionales son importantes portavoces de sus sectores de la sociedad.

específico de los casos en los que el aborto se permite claramente sería otro paso. Por último, crear oportunidades para que investigadores, profesionales de la salud y disidentes de políticas compararan información y experiencia con sus colegas de otros países puede aumentar las posibilidades de una reforma

- **El acceso a servicios integrados** que se ofrecen en la **planificación familiar de alta calidad formada** a través de la **epidemia de abortos clandestinos**. Las mujeres que no pudieren planificar eficazmente sus embarazos experimentando embarazos no programados ni deseados. Satisfacer la necesidad no resuelta — documentada — de anticoncepción en la región es el primer paso hacia la reducción del número de mujeres que recurrente al aborto intencional.
- **El acceso limitado a los servicios económicos y de salud del aborto.** El acceso limitado a servicios de aborto seguro llevan a la mujer a tomar decisiones que puden ir en detrimento de su propia salud y la de su familia. Aun en los lugares en que existen servicios de aborto, las más de las veces su provisión se realiza en condiciones insseguras, costosas y con poca consideración por el bienestar de la mujer. Además, depende de forma excesiva en los servicios de aborto regular la fertilidad continúa graves consecuencias económicas y de salud; se siguen registrando muertes paratraumas y de salud. Lesiones innecesarias y los gobiernos continúan incurriendo en costos económicos de salud pública sustanciales que se podrían evitar.
- **Entender mejor que se considera permisible dentro de la ley Bodria Mejorar el acceso a servicios seguros y producir una reforma legal integral y de mayor universalidad.** Los servicios se deberían proporcionar de conformidad con la ley y su provisión adecuada puede en sí contribuir a la reforma legal. Exigir que los hospitales públicos ofrezcan los servicios de aborto ya contemplados por la ley es tan solo un paso vital. Educar a los profesionales de salud, los de enfermería que ya tienen la ley en su favor y de la población en general de que los servicios de salud que se ofrecen en la reforma legal son legales.

- Castigar a las mujeres que reciben un aborto, o a los proveedores de salud que realizan el procedimiento, no disminuirá la frecuencia del aborto. Muchos de los que se oponen al aborto consideran que las medidas preventivas son una solución, pero con ello solo arrastran a mujeres de escasos recursos a situaciones todavía más desesperadas. Más aún, la penalización promueve una economía subterránea que hace imposibles importantes normas de salud pública.

Conclusiones

Overall

Several themes permeated the three-day meeting

- **Punishing women who have abortions, or the health providers who perform the procedure will not decrease the incidence of abortion.** Punitive measures are viewed by many opponents of abortion as a solution, yet they only push poor women into an even more desperate situation. Moreover, criminalization encourages an underground economy that removes important safety regulations and imposes costs.
 - **Inadequate access to high-quality comprehensive family planning services propel the epidemic of clandestine abortion.** Women who are unable to effectively plan their pregnancies or negotiate contraceptive use will continue to experience unintended and unwanted pregnancies. Fulfilling the documented unmet need for contraception in the region is the first step toward reducing the numbers of women who resort to unsafe abortion.
 - **Inadequate access is a driving force in the severity of the economic and health consequences of abortion.** Restricted access to safe abortion services lead women to make choices that may be detrimental to their own health and to the health of their families. Where services do exist, they are often unsafe, costly, and provided with little regard for women's well-being and undue reliance on abortion services has severe economic and health consequences. Unnecessary deaths and injuries continue to occur and governments continue to incur substantial, and avoidable, public health and economic costs.
 - **Greater understanding of what is legally permissible could improve access to safe services and could lead to more universal and comprehensive legal reform.** Services should be provided as legally permitted, and adequate provision of such services may itself contribute to legal reform. Requiring public hospital systems to provide abortions that are already legal is just one vital step. Educating health professionals, the media, and the general public about which indications for abortion are currently allowable is another. Finally, giving researchers, health professionals and policymakers opportunities to share information and experiences with peers in other countries may increase chances of legal reform.
 - **Training of health professionals must include discussion of the humane treatment o**

women faced with an unwanted pregnancy. The complexity of the social and economic motivators behind the decision to terminate an unwanted pregnancy requires sensitivity and compassion from health care providers. Postabortion counseling and management of complications further necessitates the professional, nonjudgmental involvement of providers. Health professionals are on the front line of treating abortion complications, and they have an ethical obligation to provide emergency medical care to women who need it and to work to protect women's health and well-being. Moreover, health professionals are important spokespeople in the ethical and philosophical debates that surround abortion, and their support for easing restrictions on abortion can garner similar support in other sectors of society.

▪ **Recognizing the different roles that women and men play in abortion is critical.** Denying women the right to abortion services is a tangible demonstration of gender inequity in access to and provision of health care. Men are not only often supportive of their partners' abortion decision, but are also increasingly supportive of women's right to abortion in general. Public education and advocacy strategies should thus include both female and male perspectives.

- **New abortion technologies may hold promise, but are not the complete answer.** While newer medical methods of abortion may be a cheaper and safer option for women seeking an abortion where the procedure is illegal, these technologies are not readily available to all segments of society and do not eliminate the need for legal reform. However, existing laws may be out-of-step with new abortion technologies and may present opportunities for new discussion of the rights of women to legal abortions. Researchers and advocates need to be on top of the fast-breaking advances in other related technologies as well—including prenatal diagnostic and assisted reproduction techniques—since they might create new dilemmas and opportunities in the wider abortion debate.

- **Psychological sequelae of abortion are not well understood.** Although the conference presentations demonstrated a high level of interest in the psychological effects of abortion in both adolescents and women in the general population, the selectivity of the samples available for analysis leads to only limited knowledge about women's feelings about unwanted pregnancy, their anxiety with clandestine or unsafe procedures and the intersection of abortion with other life events.

- **Good quality research cannot guarantee change, but is invaluable in calling attention to the magnitude of the problem.** Research is vital to make the connections between family planning, reduction of unintended pregnancy and abortion, to show that safe abortion care is possible even where the procedure is illegal, to document this “hidden” issue and to focus a call to action. By continuing to conduct rigorous and sound analyses of the consequences of clandestine abortion, researchers can help construct the foundations of evidence-based advocacy and reform.

To address the consequences of unwanted pregnancy and abortion will require that women, couples, communities and countries commit to both pregnancy prevention and to dealing sensitively and sensibly with the problems surrounding unwanted pregnancy. Given the desperation of many women and couples facing an unwanted pregnancy and the high levels of abortion and abortion complications that pervade Latin America and the Caribbean, it is imperative that societies invest wisely in sex education, contraceptive services, public education campaigns and treatment of post abortion complications. Moreover, in countries where laws and policies permit legal abortion, health care should include needed services and the use of the safest and most effective technologies for pregnancy termination. The Cuernavaca conference pointed to many avenues for progress, and it is now time to take the next steps made clear by the research and the participants. Often isolated and marginalized, researchers focusing on unwanted pregnancy and abortion had the unique opportunity in November 2001 to learn from and combine forces with peers as they shared their findings and expertise.

It is our hope that the meeting has served as a starting point—to stimulate new ideas and collaborations, to begin to address the problems of unwanted pregnancy and abortion more openly and to gain the attention and resources that these problems and women throughout the region and around the world deserve.

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que merecen estos problemas, así como las mujeres de
mujeres y parejas que entienden un embarazo no deseado
y los altos niveles de aborto y complicaciones derivadas
de este que prevalecen en América Latina y el Caribe,
es importante que las sociedades de la región inviertan
sabidamente en educación sexual, servicios de
atención temprana, campañas de educación pública y
tratamiento de complicaciones postaborto. Más aún, en
países donde las leyes y políticas permitan el aborto
legal, la atención a la salud debe traer incluir los servicios
requeridos y el uso de las tecnologías más seguras y
efectivas para la Interrupción del embarazo. La
avance en este tema ya se debió dar ya los siguientes
pasos que la investigación y los participantes delineaaron
claramente. Con frecuencia islandos y marginados, los
investigadores que trabajan en el embarazo no deseado
y el aborto tuvieron en noviembre de 2001 una
oportunidad igual para aprender de sus colegas y
unit fuerzas al compartir sus hallazgos y conocimientos.
Esperamos que esta reunión haya servido de punto de
partida para estimular la creación de nuevas ideas y
oportunidades de colaboración, para empazar a abordar
los problemas del embarazo no deseado y del aborto de
manera más abierta, y obtener la atención y recursos
que merecen estos problemas, así como las mujeres de

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