

# **Action for Equity**

Increasing access to affordable  
contraceptives and fertility  
control throughout Melbourne's west  
(MTOp project)

Professional development  
workshop evaluation summary

**September 2016**



Developed by Women's Health West  
for the Western Region Sexual and Reproductive Health Promotion Partnership

## Contents

Results .....	3
Needs assessment results .....	4
Usual care and referral pathways .....	4
Ideal care and referral pathways .....	4
Opinion on current MTOP availability and willingness to prescribe .....	4
Evaluation results .....	6
Workshop satisfaction .....	6
Professional development and networking .....	6
Conclusions and recommendations .....	7

*Action for Equity: A Sexual and Reproductive Health Plan for Melbourne West 2013-2017* incorporates primary prevention and service coordination initiatives that work to achieve health equity. The Action for Equity partnership is led by Women's Health West and includes seventeen partners from state and local government, community and women's health services, hospitals, a primary health networks and specialist statewide services. One of the plan's objectives is to increase access to affordable contraceptives and fertility control throughout Melbourne's west, including increasing the provision of medication termination of pregnancy (MTOP).

On 3 May 2016, a professional development workshop was delivered at the North Western Melbourne Primary Health Network (PHN) in Parkville, Melbourne. The workshop was delivered by Women's Health West in partnership with The Women's and the PHN. The evening included an overview of:

- The history of Mifepristone and Misoprostol (the two medications used for MTOP)
- Strategies to de-centralise abortion services in Victoria and Melbourne from the CBD to outer regions
- MTOP considerations and training requirements for general practitioners (GPs) and pharmacists
- Drug side effects – with a particular focus on comparisons to surgical abortion
- Exploration of case studies
- Question and answer opportunities

Attendees were invited to complete a needs assessment survey at the beginning of the event, and an evaluation form at the conclusion. The purpose of the needs assessment was to determine the clinical and professional support practitioners currently have and require to further support referral pathways and provision of MTOP in their clinic or pharmacy. The evaluation form also measured levels of satisfaction with the workshop.

## Results

Twenty three professionals<sup>1</sup> attended the workshop. This was an increase of 77 per cent compared to the workshop held in 2015. Of these attendees, five completed the needs assessment and 19 completed the evaluation form. Eighteen of the 23 professionals in attendance (78 per cent) were general practitioners. The remaining five attendees were pharmacists. At least half of the attendees practiced in the western region of Melbourne. Suburbs included:

- Yarraville
- Footscray
- Ascot Vale
- Taylors Hill
- Sunshine
- Werribee
- Altona Meadows
- St Albans

Two attendees (a pharmacist and a GP) were already providers of MTOP. These individuals currently practice in Sunshine and Narre Warren, respectively.

---

<sup>1</sup> Fields of practice included women's health, general medicine and unspecified areas of practice.

## Needs assessment results

### Usual care and referral pathways

Professionals were asked to state their care and referral pathways for pregnant women seeking counselling for pregnancy options and abortion. Respondents could provide more than one response for each question.

Responses included:

*I refer to the Royal Women's Hospital.*

(GP and prospective MTOP prescriber, northern metropolitan region)

*Refer to other GP or Family Planning to talk about and provide info.*

(Pharmacist and prospective MTOP dispenser, western metropolitan region)

For counselling, one GP stated that they would take a 'non-judgemental approach and [utilise] support groups'. Another GP stated that they had two GPs colleagues that also worked at Southern Heath, and were able to arrange counselling and abortion referral services through them. Lastly, a GP indicated that it would depend on the age of the patient, but would usually refer women to a local hospital. Unlike 2015, professionals did not mention Marie Stopes International or self-counselling as responses to this question.

### Ideal care and referral pathways

Professionals were asked to list their ideal care and referral pathways if they were to become an MTOP provider. The purpose of this question was to identify existing relationships and gaps in service communication and familiarity. Unfortunately, those that completed this section of the form (n=2) only denoted the pathways with a tick instead of specifically naming services. However, the presence of ticks on all of the service types (including pharmacy, pathology and radiology) demonstrates that professionals have already established relationships with these services in their local area.

### Opinion on current MTOP availability and willingness to prescribe

#### *Appropriate access to MTOP and STOP in the western region of Melbourne*

Responses to the statement 'Do you think there is appropriate access to MTOP and STOP (surgical termination of pregnancy) in the western region of Melbourne [or your region]?' were varied. Two of the five respondents stated that they believed there was adequate service availability in their area, one professional believed there was not enough service provision in the local area and the remaining two were unsure. When asked what the current barriers for MTOP provision were, the majority agreed that it was lack of knowledge of the procedure, lack of access and communication (information relating to service access and training), as well as privacy and 'beliefs' (presumably relating to individual moral position of GPs and colleagues). Professionals also mentioned the concern about where to access medication, patient noncompliance, legal aspects and the religious and ethical considerations within their own organisation.

*To know if the pharmacies have medication, to have good relationship with pharmacy and patient noncompliance.*

(GP and current MTOP prescriber, eastern metropolitan region)

*Considerations of some employees who may have religious and ethical issues.*

(Pharmacist and prospective MTOP dispenser, western metropolitan region)

During the 2015 workshop, professionals voiced their concerns about medication side effects, contraindications and complications. This theme was not highlighted in the 2016 needs assessment, but was discussed extensively during the workshop via a question and answer session and the complex case studies.

*Motivating factors for providing MTOP*

A theme that was consistent with all five respondents was the desire to respond to the needs of community women.

*To serve people in the society, to provide MTOP to my practice and patients from other practices and provide safe and early action.*

(GP and current MTOP prescriber, eastern metropolitan region)

*Service provision and needs of women.*

(GP and prospective MTOP prescriber, northern metropolitan region)

*Resources and support needed to provide MTOP in their practice*

Professionals described various ways in which they could be supported to provide MTOP. They mentioned the need for training that includes initial and refresher training. They also named hard copy and digital resources, as key to their MTOP provision, for themselves and their patients. One GP also stated that to become a provider he would need to be aware of the local dispensing pharmacy. This highlights the need for local networks and regular communication to ensure stock is on-hand for patients to access. Given the three month shelf life of the medication, having a local dispensary does not always guarantee available stock. Hence, increasing local pharmacy providers and referral pathways to these pharmacies is key to an effective MTOP service system.

*Future professional development training recommendations*

Attendees were asked to rank topics from most to least useful to help inform future training provided by the partnership. The below topics were ranked from 1-10, with 1 being the most useful and 10 the least useful, and compared to the 2015 results.

Table 1: Topics of interest for professionals (average)

Table 1: Topics of interest for professionals (average)

Topic	Average score (/10)	
	2015	2016
	<b>(most useful)</b>	
Overview from Western Health and The Women’s Hospitals on support they can provide in this work including the management of emergency.....	4	1
Practice overview from GPs in the region who are already providing MTOP, including insurance and cost considerations .....	6	1
MTOP case-studies: brought by training participants for questions, answers and discussion .....	4	2
MTOP case-studies assessing suitability for women: tailored by facilitators .....	4	2
Practice overview from WHW including pregnancy options as well as current STOP, MTOP and unintended pregnancy counselling service-providers .....	4.5	2.5
MTOP training requirements .....	5	4
Contraception and post-procedural care .....	5	4
Overview of abortion in Victoria (legal, social, medico-legal context) including statistics and facts regarding abortion .....	6.5	4
	<b>(least useful)</b>	
Clinical practice overview for abortion consultations including MTOP efficacy and risk, as well as complex issues such as ambivalence, risk assessment and crisis intervention .....	7	4

## Evaluation results

### Workshop satisfaction

Overall, attendees were satisfied with the proceedings of the night, scoring highly across a range of learning outcomes. While the scoring was high, the workshop venue was a topic of discussion for many, who stated that it was difficult to attend an inner-city venue on a week night and that an event in the outer western suburbs would be preferred.

*Need a venue out west as it was exceptionally difficult to get into city through peak hour.*  
(GP and prospective MTOP prescriber, western metropolitan region)

A summary of the evaluation feedback form is provided below (Table 2).

Table 2: Evaluation feedback form (n=19)

Learning outcomes	Entirely met n (%)	Partially met n (%)	Not met n (%)
Recall the training requirements for providing MTOP	18 (95)	0	0
Describe the Medical Termination of Pregnancy procedures	18 (95)	0	0
Explain the benefits of the referral pathways for GPs who provide MTOP	17 (89)	2 (11)	0
<i>Quality of the workshop</i>			
The content was relevant to my learning needs as a practicing GP/health professional	16 (84)	2 (11)	0
Overall the workshop provided a quality learning experience	17 (89)	1 (5)	0
The speakers communicated effectively with the group	19 (100)	0	0
There was plenty of opportunity for active participation	18 (95)	0	1 (5)
The venue and catering was suitable and convenient	18 (95)	1 (5)	0

Missing data not shown

Attendees noted the most useful aspects of the workshop included learning about the MTOP prescriber process and protocols, patient management and the broader, and the international context of MTOP provision. Only three professionals had a 'least useful training aspect' to document. This included venue location (as presented earlier), too much focus on MTOP history and that the RSVP list filled too quickly for the event. Other topics that professionals would like to see explored in future training include STI treatment and prevention, Implanon and IUD insertion, mental health associated with abortions and legal age of consent.

### Professional development and networking

Sixteen of the 19 participants chose to subscribe to the PHN and Women's Health West e-newsletter and ten participants were happy to be contacted by a project coordinator for follow up discussion relating to the workshop and MTOP provision plans. In the two months following the workshop, three general practitioners and one pharmacist have been in contact with Women's Health West about the MTOP provision process and were also meeting with other local service providers (e.g. radiology centres and pharmacists) to discuss referrals and networks.

## Conclusions and recommendations

The second MTOP professional development workshop continues to demonstrate the acceptance of MTOP by professionals practicing in Melbourne's west and the surrounding areas. Professionals acknowledge the need for MTOP in the community and a desire to provide a safe and localised service for community women. The already recognised referral pathways to ultrasound, radiology and pathology services by professionals is encouraging for this process. As a direct result of this training, at least four professionals have started the process of MTOP provision within their organisations and further follow-up conversations with other attendees may reveal more.

Eleven of the 19 professionals that completed the evaluation were referred to the workshop by Women's Health West (email or phone call), demonstrating the value of direct liaison with GPs and clinics in the lead-up to workshops. This process will be repeated for future workshops, in addition to promoting the workshop through the PHN newsletter and website. Professionals have stated that in order to become a provider, more resources for staff and patients and ongoing training needs to be made available. Based on the feedback received, Women's Health West recommends the partnership facilitate additional workshops on MTOP provision and other areas of sexual and reproductive health, including contraception, with a specific focus on hosting events in the outer western suburbs.

An opportunity that has been discussed within the partnership is the use of a webinar (a seminar held via an online platform), which may increase access for professionals in regional areas. When asked if they would attend a webinar, only 50 per cent of this cohort said that they would. While not specified, reasons for not utilising this platform may include inexperience with webinar software and processes and the lack of face-to-face engagement and active participation, an area that was rated highly in the 2016 learning outcomes. If wanting to explore the use of a webinar, partners will need to continue to gauge interest and provide prospective attendees with information on how to use a webinar and what to expect in order to increase confidence with a web-based workshop.

Women's Health West also recommends that the Action for Equity partnership work to create opportunities for professionals to network with current MTOP providers and to increase awareness of MTOP providers in the west via an MTOP provider map or list. This activity has already began and a number of professionals have already expressed interest in a local network. Regular professional development training post-registration is also recommended, in addition to within-practice training and informal information sharing opportunities. Also recommended is strengthening relationships with relevant teams within local emergency services to increase confidence for MTOP prescribers that patients will have appropriate and sensitive after-hours emergency care.

Women's Health West, with support from partners, submitted a grant application to the Victorian Women's Benevolent Trust in August with the hope of using funds to expand this work. Unfortunately Women's Health West were unsuccessful with this application, and will continue to explore alternative grants to fund this expansion. Women's Health West would also like to explore knowledge, awareness and acceptability among community women, and grants could be utilised to design and implement an online survey.