Reviewer’s report

Title: Self-assessment of eligibility for early medical abortion using m-Health to calculate gestational age in Cape Town, South Africa: a feasibility pilot study

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Reviewer: Gabriela Cormick

Reviewer's report:

Self-assessment of eligibility for early medical abortion using m-Health in Cape Town, South Africa: a feasibility pilot study.

General comments:

It would be useful to specify if:

* That the aim was to evaluate the ability and acceptability of self-assessment of gestational age for the eligibility of early medical abortion using m-Health. I suggest adding in the title that the only requirement assessed for the MA is the GA. The discussion mentions other criteria as IUD in situ but this was not part of the eligibility self-assessment.

* The aim of estimating the accuracy of the self assessment doesn’t seem to be adequate for this pilot study.

* The pilot study was for a mobile phone survey or for computer-based survey or for both.
Methods Section:

1. Methods: Page 4: It would be useful to include some information about these clinics, how many women they assist and what services do they have or what characteristics have the women that assist.

2. Methods: Page 4: The link is not available; I would not included unless the page can be seen.

3. Methods: It is not clear where was the site accessed from, was the link sent to the women´s phone and they completed at the clinics or they had to completed at home?

4. Methods: Page 5: Study eligibility criteria: did the phone required Internet access to upload the link? Did the criteria include a Smartphone?

5. Methods: Page 5: It would be interesting to specify if: the Research assistant was present while the women were estimating their gestational age? Was the Research assistant available for questions as well? Was there a predetermined form for the Research assistant to complete? Was the website giving any cut off for MA eligibility or only the GA?

6. Methods: Page 5: "brief survey was administered": Was the survey completed by the research assistant on his/her impression or the questions were asked to the participant. Socio-demographic data was collected from clinical records or by asking the participants?

7. Suggestion: organize the structure of the survey to clarify how many forms, which ones were self completed by participants, which completed by interviewing the participants and which one by looking at clinical records.

9. Methods: Page 5: "Seventy-eight women were enrolled and asked to complete a self-assessment on an electronic tablet by entering the first day of their last menstrual period) onto a website which calculated their gestational age. This should be part of the results section

10. Methods: Page 5: A total of 86 women were approached… this part as well should be included in the results

11. Methods: Page 5: specify who approached the women, how many days a week? How many of the women seeking an abortion during the study period were approached?

12. Suggestion: Reorder the Methods and include the information about the invitation before describing the survey.

13. The data analysis needs to specify which variables were compared using chisquare or Fisher’s test.

Results section:

14. Sociodemographic info: Page 6: 60% and 41 % do not add 100%

15. Sociodemographic info: Page 6: It would be useful to include the links to the tables showing the information described.

17. Mobile phone ownership and usage: please describe in the methods from where this information was obtained.

18. I would add the gestational age of the interviewed women in table 1.

19. All women who attended the public healthcare facility had an ultrasound performed at a referring hospital prior to being recruited into the study and therefore knew their GA. It would be useful to include this in the methodology, as the 2 groups would have this difference.

20. Page 7: Fieldworker is the same person as the research assistant? I would use the same name.

21. Page 7: Only 3/78 (4%) of women required assistance with the question whether they had an IUD in situ. One woman answered that she did not have an IUD in situ during the self-administered eligibility screening component, yet answered "yes" to the same question when asked by the research assistant during the survey component. This phrase does not refer to the subtitle were it is located.

22. It would be interesting to know, of those that did not recall LMP, how many estimated the date using the event calendar and how many enter an approximate date.

23. Online Gestational Age Calculator: The sd seems to be very large to assume that the their calculation was accurate. The SD reported seems to be of the GA and not of the Difference. These calculations need to be re-checked.

Discussion:

24. Is the calculator of gestational age particularly different from those available from other sites? Had a cut off for MA? Is the event calendar something that is provided by other calendars?
I don't think with this information it can be concluded that women would be able to self-assess their gestational age as well as their eligibility for medical abortion using an online gestational age calculator. The sample is very small.

It would be interesting to know if with only GA assessed with LMP women would be eligible for a MA.

The discussion refers to contraindications of MA in women with IUD, what are other contraindications, were those also included in the self-assessment of eligibility for MA?

List of Abbreviations:

Include TOP: also check that tables show TOP while main text shows CTOP

Table 1: Education the % sum does not add 100%.

Table 2: GA include if the numbers are days. The Tittle needs to explain in more detail what calculation was performed.

Figure 1: it does not add much information to the one provided by the tables.

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