

## Use of mifepristone for abortion limited to a few countries

Oral mifepristone, '*a safe and effective method of abortion*', is used in only a minority of countries, and most of these countries already have relatively safe abortion records, according to information conveyed at a conference held recently in London, UK, reports the *BMJ*. The conference was organised by the US-based Population Council and the UK Family Planning Association.

Mifepristone is currently available in the UK, Sweden, France, Israel and China. It has also been approved for use in another 8 countries by the European Medicines Evaluation Agency, but is awaiting national approval in those countries, and is also awaiting US approval.

Ms Beverly Winikoff from the Population Council told delegates at the conference that the lowest rates of unsafe abortion were seen in the US, western Europe, Australia and China. However, at present there are no plans for the introduction of medical abortion in those parts of the world with the highest death rates associated with abortion; these include the former Soviet Union, parts of Africa, South East Asia and South America.

Ferriman A. Medical abortion still not available in most countries. *British Medical Journal* 319: 1091, 23 Oct 1999

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