Chapter 12 Summary: Physical complications: maternal mortality from abortion

How likely is a woman to die after an induced abortion? This is difficult to answer since maternal deaths are underreported in the US and Canada. Due to the politicization of abortion in North America, many abortion-related deaths are attributed to other causes. Death certificates do not note the cause of death as abortion complications if the death occurred more than 42 days after the abortion. The greatest errors in death classification occur for post-abortive deaths.¹

Nevertheless, four large-scale, data-linkage studies have found a significantly higher maternal mortality rate from induced abortion than from childbirth. Researchers in Finland discovered that the maternal death rate after abortion was nearly four times greater than after childbirth. They further noted that 73 per cent of all pregnancy-associated deaths could not have been identified from death certificates alone and that the suicide rate after childbirth was six times lower than the suicide rate after abortion.² These findings are supported by studies conducted in Denmark and the United Kingdom, as well as a methodologically rigorous study from California.³

---