

## Reviewer's report

**Title:** Brazilian Obstetrician-Gynecologists and Abortion: A Survey of Knowledge, Opinions and Practices

**Version:** 1 **Date:** 16 June 2005

**Reviewer:** Victoria Coleman

### Reviewer's report:

General

The manuscript by Goldman, Garcia, Diaz, and Yam entitled Brazilian obstetrician-gynecologists and abortion: A survey of knowledge, opinions and practices offers an important contribution to the literature by offering insight into the knowledge Brazilian ob-gyns have of current abortion law and practice. The issue of abortion rights in Brazil has been a heated topic of debate in the past couple of years. With abortion being the fourth leading cause of maternal death in Brazil, this topic is worthy of further consideration. The authors' manuscript is well-defined and provides some interesting data that suggest only half of the respondents could correctly identify Brazilian abortion law. This speaks to a need for the development of educational initiatives geared not only towards ob-gyns, but also towards the general public who may know less about abortion law than their physicians.

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Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

1. The response rate of 38% is quite low for a physician questionnaire. It is unclear whether your sample is equivalent in terms of demographic features as the membership of FEBRASGO, but this should be addressed especially given the sample is taken from a 10% sample of FEBRASGO members.
2. The manuscript would greatly benefit from a further breakdown of age. The authors separate age groups as 26-45 and over 45. The literature points to significant differences in opinion for ob-gyns that have been out of residency 5 years or less. There may be difference hidden that should be explored, especially given the authors report of a study on p. 5 that found that "the majority of medical students thought that abortion should be legal in cases of..."
3. Reliability and validity should be addressed in the Methods section.
4. Greater focus should be given on the authors' policy recommendations or educational initiatives that may benefit Brazilian ob-gyns in the Conclusions section.

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Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

1. How many mailings were done? There should be a bit more clarification in the first paragraph of the Methods section.
2. Given that the sample is 72% Catholic, please check stats. to make sure that your statement that physicians who felt the law should be more liberal were more likely to be Catholic doesn't simply reflect the fact that the majority of your sample is Catholic. Also, given that you state that Catholicism is a predictor of more liberal views, it may be appropriate to define the religions that fall under the

category of "Other".

3. In the abstract, you state that "less than half of respondents had accurate knowledge about abortion..." Consider toning down the language to say that "less than half respondents reported accurate knowledge..."

4. "One-third of respondents had ever performed an abortion..." is confusing language. Consider revising the sentence so that it more clearly states what you are trying to say.

5. There is a spelling error in the results section of the abstract. "in favor or public funding" should be "in favor of"

6. In the paragraph prior to the start of the Discussion section, there is a spelling error--"preformed" should be "performed"

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

1. The first two sentences of the Conclusions section don't gel well with the stated purpose of the study. Consider revising.

2. You have a lot of tables. Consider re-configuring some of the tables into figures that may be easier to read. Tables 3 & 4 seem most appropriate as figures.

3. You may want to state explicitly that abortion is the fourth leading cause of maternal death in Brazil. This is a powerful statistic.

**What next?:** Accept after minor essential revisions

**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

**Quality of written English:** Needs some language corrections before being published

**Statistical review:** Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests.