

Pharmacists Expand Access to Medication Abortion

As advocates brace for attacks on medication abortion, pharmacists in Washington State begin prescribing medication abortion through pilot program

SEATTLE, WA, UNITED STATES, January 9, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- [Uplift International](#), a leading advocate for global health and human rights—in collaboration with [Honeybee Health](#), a leading online pharmacy—has launched the Pharmacist Abortion Access Project (PAAP) pilot program, expanding access to abortion care by providing the first model for pharmacists to directly prescribe medication abortion to patients. This ground-breaking project comes amid the abortion access crisis and attacks on medication abortion that will surely escalate under a Donald Trump administration.

“Attacks on access to abortion care have created an urgent medical, public health, and human rights crisis in the United States,” said Beth Rivin, M.D., M.P.H., President and CEO of Uplift International and Managing Director of PAAP. “Even in Washington State, where abortion is legal, people still face many barriers to abortion care—especially people who are struggling to make ends meet, live in rural areas, or don’t have easy access to reproductive health care. For many decades, Washington pharmacists have been leaders in expanding access to reproductive health services. Our online PAAP pilot continues that tradition by providing the first model for pharmacists to directly prescribe medication abortion to those who need it. This project paves the way for in-person prescribing of medication abortion, and we expect the PAAP will be a valuable model for other states, too.”

Since 1979, pharmacists in Washington have been legally recognized as health care providers and authorized to prescribe FDA-approved medications. Pharmacists in Washington regularly prescribe medications such as chemotherapeutics for cancer and anti-retroviral drugs for HIV under complex protocols, in coordination with physicians and other providers on a patient’s medical team.

The PAAP pilot engaged and prepared 10 pharmacists to prescribe mifepristone and misoprostol, the standard medication abortion regimen, to patients in Washington. Mifepristone and misoprostol are effective FDA-approved medications used for early abortion care. Pharmacists’ training and preparation to participate in the PAAP mirrored physician and nurse practitioner training, including screening for patient eligibility, exclusion criteria, and counseling via an online portal. By the end of the Washington pilot program, the pharmacists successfully

prescribed medication abortion to 43 people who fit the protocol criteria. Prescriptions were dispensed through Honeybee Health.

“Prescribing medication abortion fits squarely within Washington pharmacists’ expertise and scope of practice,” said Don Downing, a Co-Director of PAAP and Professor Emeritus of Pharmacy at the University of Washington. “Pharmacists are embracing the Pharmacist Abortion Access Project because we welcome the ability to function at the full extent of our licensure and training. This is a model of care with enormous potential in Washington State and across the country.”

“I wanted to be a part of this trial in any way possible,” one pharmacist participating in the PAAP pilot project said. “Pharmacists are the most accessible health care provider and I’m excited to be part of this trial and make choice happen for more patients.”

“Women are able to take care of their own health and make decisions for themselves,” said another pharmacist participating in the PAAP pilot program. “I think pharmacists are in a position to help them do that.”

“Medication abortion prescribed by a pharmacist and delivered by mail is a safe, effective, and private option that expands access to people who need it,” said Dr. Jessica Nouhavandi, a Co-Director of the PAAP and Co-founder and President of Honeybee Health. “This project stems from the work we started in 2020, where I realized pharmacists could play a significant role in providing medication abortion and improving access to reproductive health care. The Pharmacist Abortion Access Project is the culmination of years of work trying to integrate pharmacists alongside other providers to expand care. We’re proud to be increasing access to medication abortion in Washington, and we hope this opens a pathway for pharmacist provision in other states.”

“Pharmacists should be an important part of medication abortion provision. Pharmacies often have hours that are more convenient for people, and pharmacists have a long history of providing medication with appropriate counseling,” said Dr. Sarah Prager, Professor and Division Chief of Complex Family Planning in the Department of OBGYN at the University of Washington School of Medicine. “I am hopeful that this will become another routine avenue for obtaining a medication abortion.”

Following this successful pilot program, Uplift International plans to scale the Pharmacist Abortion Access Project across Washington and to explore pharmacists prescribing medication abortion in person from brick-and-mortar pharmacies. This project provides a model for other states to explore and adopt.

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Uplift International pioneers innovative solutions that advance the health and human rights of

every person, including the rights to sexual and reproductive health.

We do this by partnering with communities to conduct multidisciplinary, community-based research; building rights-based programs to expand access to comprehensive reproductive health care services; and creating bioethics training for health and legal professionals so the rights of all individuals will be respected and protected, no matter where they live.

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