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ATTENTION: National & Health Desks

**Trauma Symptoms After Abortion Are Common,
New Study Shows**

**Women Attribute Substance Abuse, Sexual Disorders, and
Suicidal Thoughts to Abortion**

Springfield, IL (November 16, 2004) -- Post-traumatic reactions to induced abortion may be far more common than previously thought, according to a new study published in the *Medical Science Monitor*. Sixty-five percent of American women studied experienced multiple symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), which they attributed to their abortions. Slightly over 14 percent reported all the symptoms necessary for a clinical diagnosis of abortion induced PTSD.

Researchers gathered data from women seeking general health care treatment at clinics and hospitals in both the United States and Russia. Women with a history of pregnancy loss, including miscarriage or abortion, were asked to complete an extensive questionnaire about their experiences.

The subsample used in this study included 331 Russian women and 217 American women. American women were significantly more likely to report traumatic reactions they attributed to their abortions, while Russian women were more likely to report disruption of cognitive schema, which is described as the equivalent of one's "psychological road map" for understanding the world and one's place in it.

Both Russian and American women were more likely to experience negative reactions to abortion if they had prior negative opinions of abortion, felt pressured into unwanted abortions, were more religious,

or received little or no counseling prior to the abortion. American women were more likely to report being exposed to one or more of these risk factors. For example, 64 percent of American women felt pressured by others to choose abortion compared to 37 percent of Russian women. In addition, only 25 percent of American women reported receiving adequate counseling prior to their abortions compared to 64 percent of the Russian women.

American and Russian women reported fewer positive reactions to abortion than negative ones. The most commonly reported positive reaction was relief, but only 7 percent of Russian women and 14 percent of American women attributed this feeling to their abortions. American women were more likely to attribute to their abortion subsequent thoughts of suicide (36 percent), increased use of drugs or alcohol (27 percent), sexual problems (24 percent), relationship problems (27 percent), guilt (78 percent), and an inability to forgive themselves (62 percent). Approximately two percent of the American women studied attributed a subsequent psychiatric hospitalization to their abortion.

"This is the first published study to compare reactions to abortion among women in two different countries," said Dr. Vincent Rue, the lead author of the study and a traumatologist who heads the Institute for Pregnancy Loss. "It is also the first to provide a detailed breakdown of traumatic symptoms which the subjects themselves attribute to their abortions. These results will help mental health workers to be better prepared to recognize and treat the psychological complications of abortion."

While this new study focuses on traumatic reactions to abortion, it follows on the heels of nearly a dozen other peer-reviewed studies published in the last three years linking abortion to increased risk of [depression](#), [anxiety](#), [substance abuse](#), [suicidal behavior](#). Recent studies have also linked abortion to higher rates of [death from heart disease](#), which investigators believe may be a long term effect of elevated rates of anxiety and depression.

Because of the increasing concern about the mental health effects of abortion on women, legislation has been introduced in Congress to expand funding for treatment programs and research in this area.

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Citing: Rue VM, Coleman PK, Rue JJ, Reardon DC. Induced abortion and traumatic stress: A preliminary comparison of American and Russian women. *Med Sci Monit*, 2004 10(10): SR5-16.

The article can be downloaded free of charge at

<http://www.medscimonit.com/medscimonit/modules.php?name=GetPDF&pg=2&idm=4923>

Media interviews can be arranged through Amy Sobie (217) 525-8202

The above news release, along with other news on recent studies related to abortion complications, is posted at www.afterabortion.info/news

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Elliot Institute

The Post-Abortion Review

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