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**To:** Interested Parties

**From:** NARAL Pro-Choice America Research Team

**Date:** June 15, 2023

## Medication Abortion Disinformation Trends Surrounding *Alliance for Hippocratic Medicine v. FDA*

NARAL's Research Team tracked the spread of medication abortion-related disinformation across media platforms as the *Alliance for Hippocratic Medicine v. FDA (AHM)* case progressed. This report highlights disinformation trends in the media and on Facebook and Twitter following the 2022 midterm elections until mid-May of 2023. NARAL's analysis found that the reproductive freedom movement effectively elevated our messaging over disinformation on social media and in the news cycle. By ramping up awareness campaigns and bringing attention to the threats against and potential impacts to medication abortion access, the reproductive freedom movement's messaging broke through the noise and educated Americans about the importance of continued access to this vital method of abortion care.

### Key Findings

- Since the beginning of 2023, accurate reporting on medication abortion care outperformed anti-abortion disinformation by 179%.
- The majority of high-performing posts on Facebook (78.6%) and Twitter (93.7%) in 2023 accurately discussed medication abortion
  - In late-2022, disinformation was rampant on Facebook, with 68.1% of top posts containing inaccurate information
- Anti-abortion extremists ramped up disinformation campaigns on social media and in the news throughout 2023

### Medication Abortion Disinformation in the Media

The anti-abortion movement's attempts to shift the public narrative away from its horrific agenda have been consistent since the start of this year. The anti-abortion movement began 2023 by ramping up medication abortion-related disinformation in the media **by 502.9%** compared to their efforts at the end of 2022. From February to March of 2023 alone, articles containing disinformation rose by 99%. These increased attacks on medication abortion care followed the *AHM* lawsuit, which challenged the FDA's approval of medication abortion, and the subsequent news coverage on abortion access.

Notably, the same day [NARAL published its analysis](#) of the potential impact the lawsuit would have on access to medication abortion care, anti-abortion media tried to downplay the implications of an impending decision on reproductive freedom. They increasingly [fearmongered](#) and amplified articles containing [medical disinformation](#) once affirmative,



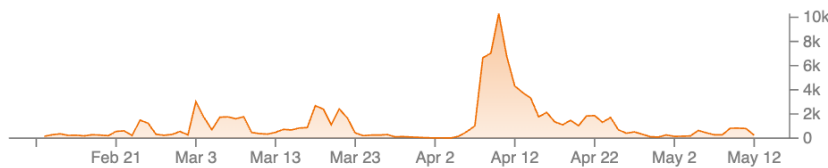
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evidence-based information about medication abortion started to dominate the public discourse. The chart below depicts the trends in the spread of medication abortion disinformation in right-wing media since early 2023. During this timeframe, the anti-abortion movement and its propaganda networks amplified falsehoods about the safety, popularity, and accessibility of medication abortion care.

## Medication Abortion Disinformation 📅 Feb 12, 2023 • 12 AM - May 12, 2023 • 11:59 PM

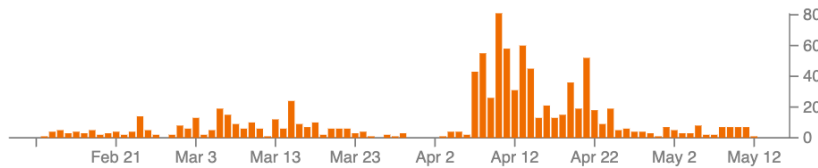
### Public Interest 103.8k Total interactions

Social media interactions on articles per day



### Media Interest 972 Articles published

Number of articles published per day



A timeline documenting 103,800 interactions on media with medication abortion-related disinformation terms from February 12, 2023, to May 12, 2023. During this time frame, 972 articles published included medication abortion-related disinformation terms.

Despite the uptick in attacks on medication abortion care, the reproductive freedom movement succeeded in pushing back against attempts by anti-abortion bad actors to control the narrative. The chart below illustrates the reproductive freedom movement's success at ensuring that mainstream media did not platform anti-abortion propaganda. Since the beginning of 2023, accurate reporting on medication abortion care **outperformed anti-abortion disinformation by 179%**.

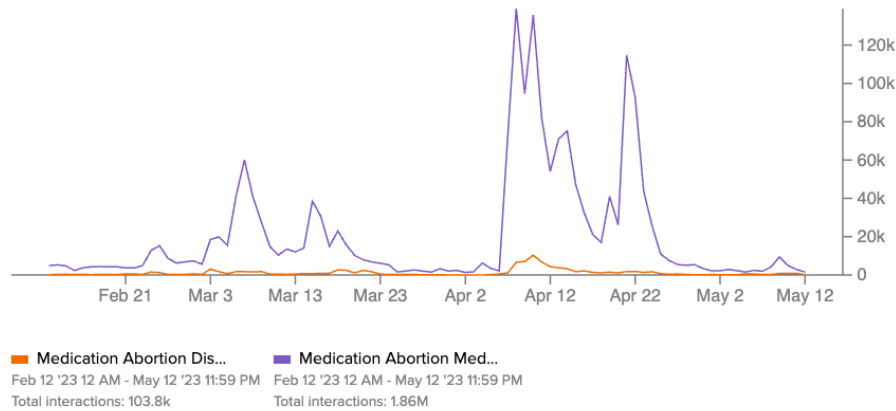


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## Public Interest

Feb 12 '23 12 AM - May 12 '23 11:59 PM

Social media interactions on articles per day



*A timeline comparing engagement on disinformation surrounding medication abortion care in the media to accurate reporting on medication abortion care based on media interactions from February 12, 2023, to May 12, 2023. Medication abortion-related disinformation, the orange on the line graph, totaled 103,800 interactions during the time period. Accurate reporting on medication abortion care, (the purple line), totaled 1.86 million interactions across the time period.*

Of the 65,200 articles about medication abortion since January 1, 2023, 63,100 reported on it using medically accurate language. As the *AHM* case progresses through the courts, it is essential that mainstream media continue to report on medication abortion care and the state of reproductive freedom using accurate and destigmatizing language to neutralize anti-abortion disinformation.

## Tracking the Spread of Disinformation on Social Media

In 2023, more than half of Facebook and Twitter posts discussing medication abortion care contained medically accurate information. Notably, the analysis showed a **230% increase in social media engagement** from February to March 2023, with articles that accurately reported on medication abortion. This spike is directly tied to pushback from [lawmakers](#) confronting [Walgreens](#) for buckling to anti-abortion political pressure as well as [Democratic Attorneys General](#) advocating for the FDA to protect access to medication abortion care. This spike illustrates that when reproductive freedom advocates proactively engage in the conversation around abortion care, positive coverage around our issue increases.

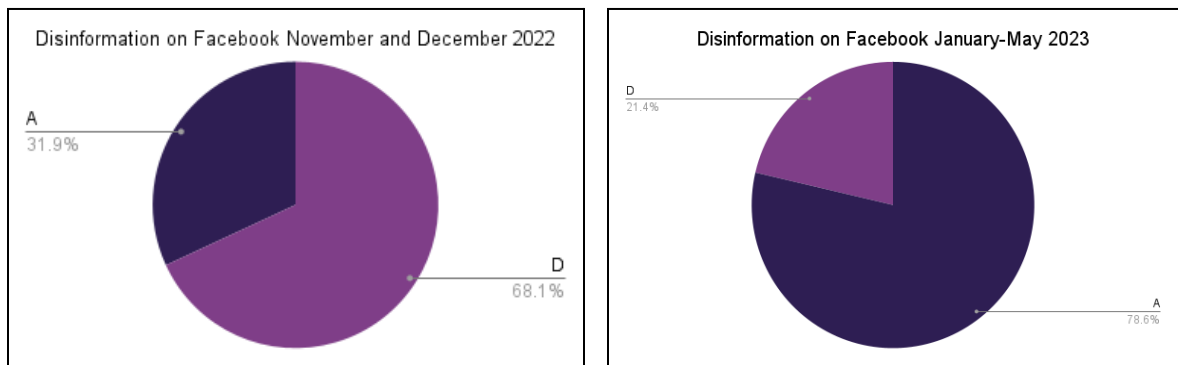
Moreover, as the *AHM* appeals process continued throughout April 2023, the media kept their coverage centered on facts and science rather than amplifying disinformation about medication abortion care. This prevented anti-abortion bad actors from capitalizing on the rapidly shifting legal landscape as a means to amplify disinformation about the availability and safety of medication abortion care. The data visualizations below show the breakdown of



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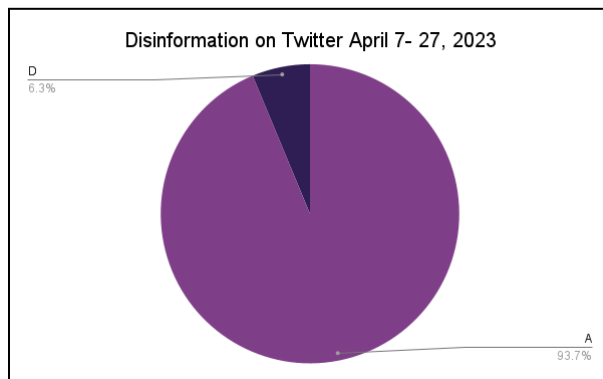
accurate/neutral (A) posts and posts containing disinformation (D) on Twitter in 2023 and Facebook from November 2022 to May 2023.

Following the 2022 midterm elections, medication abortion-related disinformation on Facebook was rampant, with 68% of posts analyzed in late 2022 containing anti-abortion language and narratives. While analyses from November and December of 2022 show that the anti-abortion movement dominated social media with propaganda and disinformation, 2023 Facebook trends provide a stark contrast. From January to May of 2023, posts that discussed medication abortion care using **accurate language comprised over 75% of the top content on Facebook.**



Data visualizations illustrating medication abortion-related disinformation on social media in November and December of 2022 and January 1- May 12, 2023. In 2022 disinformation made up 68.1% of the posts on Facebook, and accurate reporting was 31.9% of posts. In 2023, posts containing disinformation comprised 21.4% of the sample, and accurate reporting on medication abortion comprised 78.6%.

On Twitter, medication abortion-related disinformation comprised less than ten percent (8.3%) of the posts reviewed. This data illustrates that the reproductive freedom movement is successfully overpowering anti-abortion disinformation regarding medication abortion across Twitter.





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A data visualization illustrating medication abortion-related disinformation on social media from January 1- May 12, 2023. The dark purple represents posts containing disinformation (6.3%). The light purple represents posts that accurately reported on medication abortion (93.7%).

These findings highlight the success of the reproductive freedom movement in thwarting anti-abortion narratives on medication abortion care and preventing disinformation from dominating the discourse on social media and in the news. As litigation for the AHM case continues, news outlets must call out anti-abortion disinformation rather than amplify such propaganda. Anti-abortion extremists depend on falsehoods and disinformation to attack abortion care because they know their stance is unpopular. They appropriate science to fit their ultimate agenda of control over people's reproductive freedoms. Allowing the spread of disinformation to run rampant on social media and in the news is dangerous, especially as the AHM case continues. Focusing on accurate and scientific information in the discourse surrounding medication abortion will ensure that the safety and efficacy of medication abortion care is at the forefront rather than baseless anti-abortion disinformation.

**Research Methodology for Media Analysis:**

Using NewsWhip data, NARAL's Research Team compared social media interactions (posts, likes, comments, and shares) on right-wing media before 2023 (October 11- December 31, 2022) and 2023 (January 1- May 12, 2023) on eight key terms related to anti-abortion disinformation narratives surrounding medication abortion. The NewsWhip data measured Facebook and Twitter engagement on web articles and posts by site users. Data on engagement supplies evidence of the dissemination and traction that anti-abortion disinformation campaigns had during these two time periods. To measure mainstream coverage of medication abortion care, NARAL's Research Team measured interactions on media coverage of medication abortion care using medically accurate terms before and after the new year. NARAL's team also analyzed the growth of disinformation in articles by quantifying the amount of articles containing disinformation.

**Research Methodology for Analysis of Facebook and Twitter Content:**

To analyze Facebook and Twitter content related to medication abortion, we utilized data from NewsWhip Spike from November 9, 2022, to May 12, 2023. Of the posts on Facebook that included medication abortion-related key terms over that period, we analyzed those with 150 interactions or more, a total sample of 1307 posts. For Twitter posts, we analyzed posts with over 100 shares, a total sample of 1177 posts. After individually reviewing each post to determine if it contained or linked to articles with medically inaccurate information about medication abortion, we calculated the breakdown between factual posts and posts promoting disinformation.