

Miscarriage and Recurrent Miscarriage : an evaluation of Irish and UK websites

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BACKGROUND

The internet is a recognised resource for women seeking pregnancy loss-related information. Miscarriage is a common adverse pregnancy outcome of agonizing nature to those bereaved. The risk of first-trimester miscarriage is approximately 15% for all pregnancies. The aim of this study was to examine websites directed at pregnant women, women experiencing pregnancy loss or couples trying to conceive and to assess the provided content on miscarriage and recurrent miscarriage (RM), including treatment, investigation and common risk factors.

METHODS

Quantitative website content analysis was undertaken.

The websites analysed were restricted to those hosted in Ireland and the UK
Website selection comprised of multiple sources with purposive sampling utilised for selection. Websites were categorised according to topic (e.g. pregnancy/maternity, general pregnancy loss etc.) and defined provider.

Websites were searched for:

1. Basic miscarriage & RM information
2. Recognised miscarriage risk factors
3. RM-associated conditions
4. Investigation and treatment of RM.

Links to external sources were also recorded. Data were analysed descriptively.

Websites were accessed in November 2021.

RESULTS

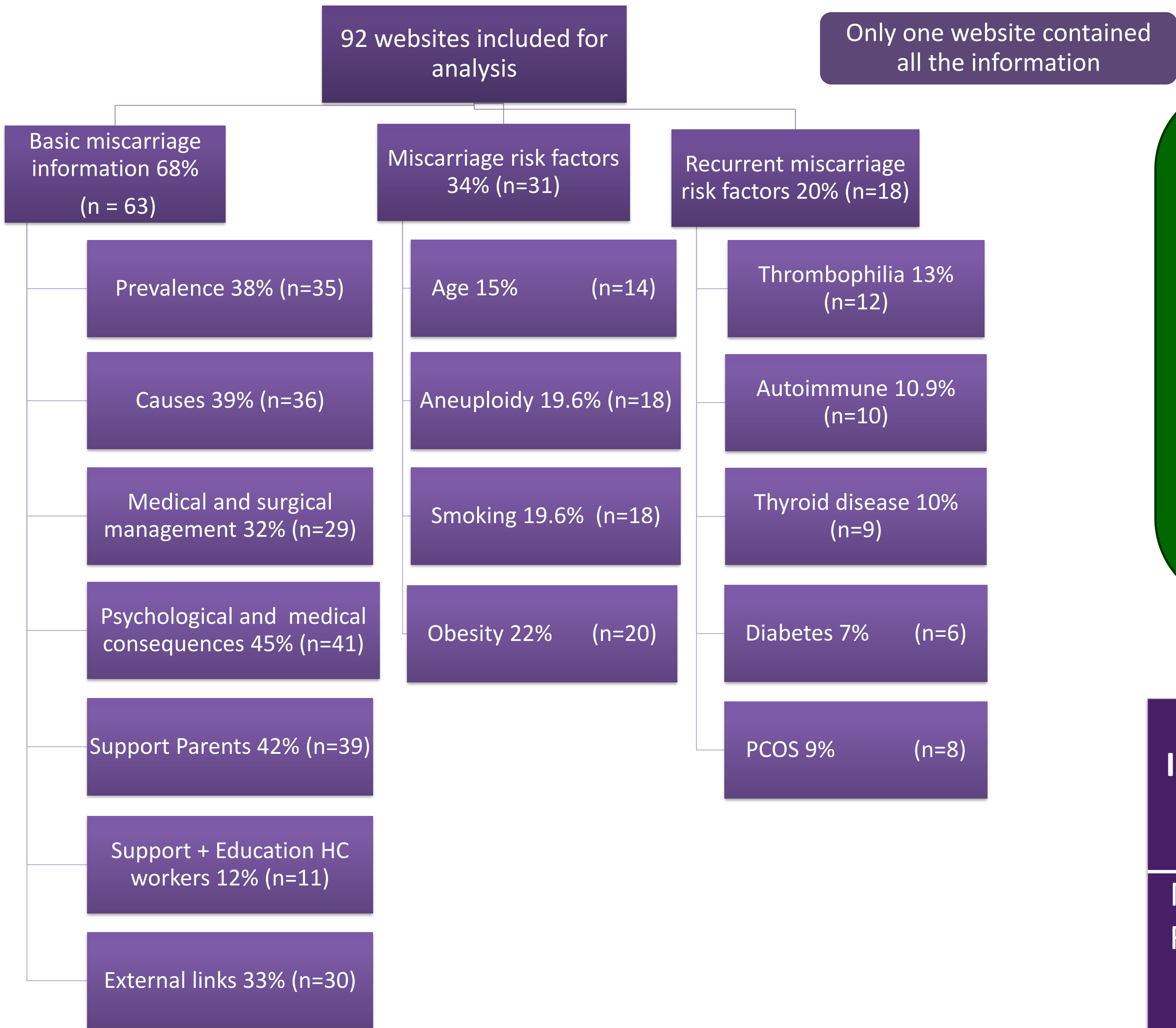


Figure 1. Information searched on the websites and prevalence of appearance.

Basic information on **recurrent miscarriage (RM)** featured in 32% (n=29) of websites; 80% of commercial sites, (n=8/10), vs 0% of support websites (0/4). (**Table 1**)

UK websites were more likely to define RM (46%, n=13 vs 25% n=16).

80% of websites (n=74) did not mention conditions associated with RM.

Regardless of provider, RM investigations, medication and treatment were rarely mentioned (0-17%).

Medications and treatments were not mentioned on any public health service sites (0/23).

Miscarriage information was present on **68% (n=63)** of websites. Information about medical and psychological consequences was the most frequently mentioned topic (See Figure 1)

100% of commercial websites contained basic information, compared to 50% of professional and support sites (n=5, n=2)

Obesity was the most common risk factor mentioned (22%, n=20).

Charity and commercial sites were more likely to contain information on risk factors (73%, n=8 and 70%, n=7)

Table 1. Information according to website provider category

Information	Professional (n=10)	Charities (n=11)	Support groups (n=4)	Commercial (n=10)	Health Service (n=23)	Private Health Service (n=34)	Total (n=92)
Miscarriage Risk Factors	40% (n=4)	73%. (n=8)	0	70% (n=7)	22% (n=5)	21% (n=7)	34% (n=31)
RM associated conditions	10% (n=1)	36% (n=4)	0	60% (n=6)	4% (n=1)	18% (n=6)	20% (n=18)
Investigations	20% (n=2)	36% (n=4)	0	40% (n=4)	9% (n=2)	12% (n=11)	17% (n=16)
Medications	13% (n=12)	18% (n=2)	0	40% (n=4)	0	9% (n=3)	13% (n=12)
Treatment	9% (n=8)	9% (n=1)	0	20% (n=2)	0	12% (n=4)	9% (n=8)
IVF & PGT-A	22% (n=20)	18% (n=2)	0	70% (n=7)	4% (n=1)	27% (n=9)	22% (n=20)

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that pregnancy websites are a poor source of information on miscarriage and RM.

There is a paucity of in-depth information on miscarriage in general and there are few sites providing comprehensive information on RM.

In order to improve awareness and agency, as well as aid decision making, women should have access to

medically-accurate, reliable and user-friendly information sources, preferably provided by national health services.



Learn more about the Pregnancy Loss Research Group’s work in Recurrent Miscarriage