

Facts Are Important Abortion is Health Care

Facts are very important, especially when discussing the health of women and the American public. The fact is, abortion is an essential component of women's health care.

The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG), with over 57,000 members, maintains the highest standards of clinical practice and continuing education for the nation's women's health physicians. Abortion care is included in medical training, clinical practice, and continuing medical education.

ACOG is committed to advancing education and training for ob-gyn residents through its Council on Resident Education in Obstetrics and Gynecology, which includes abortion as one of the educational objectives within the *Core Curriculum in Obstetrics and Gynecology, 10th Edition* that helps define competency in graduate medical education.^{i,ii} Abortion is also included in the *2015 Bulletin for the Oral Examination for Basic Certification in Obstetrics and Gynecology's* Gynecology Case List for oral board examinations offered and conducted by the American Board of Obstetrics and Gynecology.

ACOG's *Guidelines for Women's Health Care, A Resource Manual, 4th Edition*, encompassing the full spectrum of clinical and management issues relating to women's health care, lists abortion among the array of services that make up *Gynecologic Care*.ⁱⁱⁱ

ACOG has issued several evidence-based clinical practice guidelines and official statements on abortion. ACOG's November 2014 *Statement of Policy* reads in part:

Induced abortion is an essential component of women's health care. Like all medical matters, decisions regarding abortion should be made by patients in consultation with their health care providers and without undue interference by outside parties. Like all patients, women obtaining abortion are entitled to privacy, dignity, respect, and support.^{iv}

Many factors influence or necessitate a woman's decision to have an abortion. They include, but are not limited to, contraceptive failure, barriers to contraceptive use and access, rape, incest, intimate partner violence, fetal anomalies, illness during pregnancy, and exposure to teratogenic medications.

Pregnancy complications, including placental abruption, bleeding from placenta previa, preeclampsia or eclampsia, and cardiac or renal conditions, may be so severe that abortion is the only measure to preserve a woman's health or save her life.

Where abortion is illegal or highly restricted, women resort to unsafe means to end unwanted pregnancies, including self-inflicted abdominal and bodily trauma, ingestion of dangerous chemicals, self-medication with a variety of drugs, and reliance on unqualified abortion providers.^{v,vi} Today, approximately 21 million women around the world obtain unsafe, illegal abortions each year, and complications from these unsafe procedures account for approximately 13% of all maternal deaths, nearly 50,000 annually.^{v,vi}

Sound health policy is best based on scientific fact and evidence-based medicine. **The best health care is provided free of political interference in the patient-physician relationship.** Personal decision-making by women and their doctors should not be replaced by political ideology.

ACOG supports robust, factual debate on issues of importance to the American people. We welcome the opportunity to provide expert factual information on issues related to women's health.

ⁱ Educational Objectives: Core Curriculum in Obstetrics and Gynecology, 10th Edition. The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists. Washington, DC: American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists; 2013.

ⁱⁱ Medical residents may opt out of abortion training. "ACGME Review Committee for Obstetrics and Gynecology Clarification of Program Requirement: IV.A.2.d" available at:

http://www.acgme.org/acgmeweb/Portals/0/PFAssets/ProgramResources/220_OBGYN_Abortion_Training_Clarification.pdf

ⁱⁱⁱ Guidelines for Women's Health Care, A Resource Manual, 4th Edition. The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists. Washington, DC: American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists; 2014.

^{iv} Abortion Policy. Statement of Policy. American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists. Washington, DC: American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists; 2014.

^v World Health Organization. Unsafe abortion: global and regional estimates of the incidence of unsafe abortion and associated mortality in 2008. 6th ed. Geneva: WHO; 2011.

^{vi} Guttmacher Institute. Facts on induced abortion worldwide. New York (NY): GI; 2012.