

AMERICAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION HOUSE OF DELEGATES

Resolution: 007
(A-18)

Introduced by: Women Physicians Section

Subject: Oppose the Criminalization of Self-Induced Abortion

Referred to: Reference Committee on Amendments to Constitution and Bylaws
(Peter H. Rheinstein, MD, JD, MS, Chair)

- 1 Whereas, Self-induced abortion involves women attempting to induce abortion without medical
2 assistance¹; and
3
4 Whereas, Laws criminalizing self-induced abortion increase health risks and deter patients from
5 seeking necessary healthcare services related to self-induced abortion or miscarriage²; and
6
7 Whereas, Laws criminalizing patients who self-induce abortion lead to increased suspicion
8 towards patients presenting to healthcare providers for miscarriage³; and
9
10 Whereas, From the beginning of 2011 through July 2016, states enacted 334 new legal
11 restrictions on abortion, further limiting access to abortion care. In 2018 alone, 695 provisions
12 have already been introduced to further restrict abortion⁴; and
13
14 Whereas, National studies of abortion patients have shown that approximately 2% of patients
15 attempted to self-induce an abortion at some point in their lives. That number is higher in states
16 such as Texas with stricter legal restrictions on abortion, where one study showed that 7% of
17 patients attempted some method to end their pregnancy before presenting to the clinic⁵; and
18
19 Whereas, Google search trends from 2005 and 2015 have shown a relative increase in
20 searches for self-induced abortion that correlate with state-based abortion restrictions⁶; and
21
22 Whereas, There were more than 700,000 Google searches looking into self-induced abortions
23 in 2015⁷; and
24
25 Whereas, A recent online study of 1,235 people who google searched “self-abortion” revealed
26 that almost three-quarters (73%) indicated that they were searching for information because
27 they were pregnant and did not or may not want to be⁸; and
28
29 Whereas, Self-induced abortion is significantly associated with post-abortion complications,
30 maternal morbidity and mortality⁹; and
31
32 Whereas, The ability and willingness to access medical care if complications relating to self-
33 induced abortion arise are essential for patient safety¹⁰; and
34
35 Whereas, People of color are disproportionately targeted for prosecution and criminalization
36 related to pregnancy outcomes¹¹; and

- 1 Whereas, The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) has taken a very
2 strong position that women should not be prosecuted for trying to end their own pregnancies.
3 ACOG additionally opposes forcing physicians to share information about patients due to its
4 burdensome interference in the patient-provider relationship¹²; therefore be it
5
6 RESOLVED, That our American Medical Association oppose the criminalization of self-induced
7 abortion as it increases patients' medical risks and deters patients from seeking medically
8 necessary services (New HOD Policy); and be it further
9
10 RESOLVED, That our AMA advocate against any legislative efforts to criminalize self-induced
11 abortion. (New HOD Policy)

Fiscal note: Minimal - less than \$1,000.

Received: 05/01/18

References:

1. Criminalization of Self-Induced Abortion Intimidates and Shames Women Unnecessarily. Available at <https://www.acog.org/About-ACOG/News-Room/News-Releases/2018/Criminalization-of-Self-Induced-Abortion-Intimidates-and-Shames-Women-Unnecessarily>.
2. Rowan, Andrea. "Prosecuting women for self-inducing abortion: Counterproductive and lacking compassion." *Guttmacher Policy Review* 18.3 (2015): 70-76.
3. *Ibid*.
4. Abortion. Available at <https://www.guttmacher.org/united-states/abortion>.
5. Decriminalization of Self-Induced Abortion. Available at <https://www.acog.org/Clinical-Guidance-and-Publications/Position-Statements/Decriminalization-of-Self-Induced-Abortion>.
6. MAP: Google Searches For 'Self-Induced Abortion' Track Almost Perfectly With Anti-Choice States. Available at <https://thinkprogress.org/map-google-searches-for-self-induced-abortion-track-almost-perfectly-with-anti-choice-states-c6c01db3e692/>.
7. Stephens-Davidowitz S. The return of the D.I.Y. abortion. *New York Times*. March 6, 2016:SR2. Available at https://www.nytimes.com/2016/03/06/opinion/sunday/the-return-of-the-diy-abortion.html?_r=0. Retrieved March 20, 2018.
8. What are people looking for when they google "self-abortion"? Available at [http://www.contraceptionjournal.org/article/S0010-7824\(18\)30068-4/fulltext#ac0005](http://www.contraceptionjournal.org/article/S0010-7824(18)30068-4/fulltext#ac0005).
9. Halt Criminalization. Available at <https://www.sjalegalteam.org/halt-criminalization>.
10. Melese T, Habte D, Tsima BM, et al. High Levels of Post-Abortion Complication in a Setting Where Abortion Service Is Not Legalized. Gebhardt S, ed. *PLoS ONE*. 2017;12(1):e0166287. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0166287.
11. Mississippi Woman Criminally Charged for Pregnancy Outcome After Home Birth. Available at <https://rewire.news/article/2018/02/06/mississippi-woman-criminally-charged-pregnancy-outcome-home-birth/>.
12. Criminalization of Self-Induced Abortion Intimidates and Shames Women Unnecessarily. Available at <https://www.acog.org/About-ACOG/News-Room/News-Releases/2018/Criminalization-of-Self-Induced-Abortion-Intimidates-and-Shames-Women-Unnecessarily>.

Relevant AMA Policy:

[Right to Privacy in Termination of Pregnancy H-5.993](#)

[Pregnancy Termination H-5.983](#)

[Opinion 4.2.7 Abortion](#)

[H-5.995 Abortion](#)

[H-160.946 The Criminalization of Health Care Decision Making](#)