

RCOG: a valued and impactful voice on global issues that impact abortion care

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Background

The Making Abortion Safe programme has given the RCOG scope to expand its international abortion advocacy work. As an internationally recognised medical authority, RCOG is well positioned to lead and support international advocacy to expand access to quality abortion care.

Design:

The RCOG’s international abortion advocacy strategy has been developed through consultation with RCOG members and partner organisations. It builds on information gathered from a membership survey, on the advocacy efforts initiated by the Making Abortion Safe SRHR champions, as well as evidence-based best practice. The strategy is built around the existing portfolio of programmatic and country-advocacy work of the RCOG, to ensure that our international advocacy is rooted in first hand-experiences and practice, and informed from the bottom up.

Fig.1 Four priority areas of the strategy



What is advocacy?

At its core, advocacy is about influencing decisions and convincing an individual, a group, organisation or institution to change – their practices, their laws, their policies, or their ways of working around a specific situation or issue.

RCOG MAS definition of ‘abortion advocacy’:

A series of planned, organised, and strategic activities to influence decision makers and implementers’ policy, legislation and practice, to achieve positive and long-term changes for women, girls and pregnant peoples’ access to safe, legal, high quality and accessible abortion care.

Advocacy tactics

- Attending and presenting at conferences
- Running webinars
- Writing statements
- Writing op-eds
- Holding meetings with policy makers and officials,
- Forming networks and partnerships.

FSRH press statement: RCOG and FSRH welcome RCGP vote on the decriminalisation of abortion



In a survey of RCOG members in March 2021, 39% had never been involved in abortion advocacy work however 78% said they would (likely or very likely) support RCOG safe abortion advocacy work

Results:

- Involvement of the RCOG in international policy forums and debates about abortion has generally been well received.
- Joined a core group of partner organisations to produce a statement condemning the repeal of Roe v Wade which was signed by over 300 health focused organisations from across the world.
 - Research led by RCOG members into the safety and efficacy of telemedicine abortion used to inform the WHO’s recommendation in favour of telemedicine as an abortion pathway.
 - Successful in securing 150m safe access zones around abortion clinics in England and Wales with an amendment to the Public Order Act.
 - The Coalition of UK Health Professional Bodies and Royal Colleges for SRHR, established and managed by the RCOG, has been advocating for the UK Government to prioritise SRHR within its international development programmes and funding.

The Data

Over the course of the MAS project:

- RCOG members and HQ staff have used **23 different national and international advocacy platforms** to raise awareness, disseminate or challenge opinions regarding abortion
- The College has been cited in **advocating on abortion topics at high level meetings/events, through media and/or public statements 63 times**
- Our Champions have **produced 34 public facing communications materials** on the topic of abortion which have been shared through RCOG, MAS programme or external communication channels
- We have used 20 different national and international advocacy platforms **in partnership with others** to raise awareness, disseminate or challenge opinions regarding abortion

Conclusions:

The RCOG as an internationally recognised medical authority and a trusted voice for policy makers, clinicians and patients alike, can be a valued and impactful voice on global issues that impact abortion care. Working in collaboration with members and fellows is critical to achieving the greatest and most sustainable impacts.

Making Abortion Safe

RCOG's global initiative to advocate for women's health



‘Blood on their hands’: world’s medics condemn US overturn of abortion rights

Statement signed by more than 100 global healthcare groups says US court decision ‘will cost lives for years to come’



Pro-choice activists say overturning Roe v Wade is an ‘unconscionable attack’ on women’s rights. Photograph: Gemunu Amarasinghe/AP

Doctors and pro-choice activists have condemned the overturning of **Roe v Wade**, describing it as an “unconscionable attack” that will leave the supreme court justices with “blood on their hands” and cause a global chilling effect on women’s rights.

In a **statement** signed by more than 100 global healthcare organisations, including the UK’s Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RCOG), medics said the US supreme court’s move was “a catastrophic blow” to millions. The statement, also signed by the RCOG’s faculty of sexual and