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Frankie Wildish | Contributing Writer | 8 hours ago



BRITISH WOMEN ARE ORDERING ABORTION PILLS ONLINE DUE TO DIFFICULTY ACCESSING CLINICS

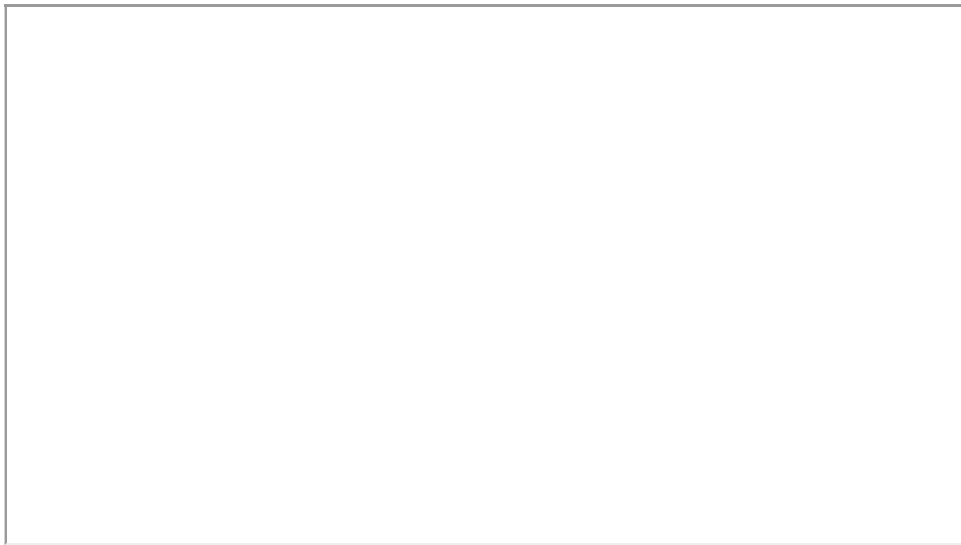
THE DEBRIEF: DESPITE ABORTIONS BEING LEGAL IN (MOST OF) THE UK, MORE WOMEN ARE FINDING IT HARD TO ACCESS IN-CLINIC CARE

The British Pregnancy Advisory Service (BPAS) report a 'staggering' amount of British women are illegally ordering abortion (<http://www.thedebrief.co.uk/news/real-life/what-actually-happens-when-you-get-an-abortion-20151055362>) pills online, due to difficulties in accessing in-clinic abortion care (<https://www.newscientist.com/article/2148066-hundreds-of-uk-women-are-seeking-illegal-abortions-online/>).

Almost half of the women surveyed (49%) said that issues surrounding accessing an abortion clinic, like transport, delays in service, getting time off work and childcare restraints meant that they obtained abortion pills from the internet instead. Charity Women on Web (<https://www.womenonweb.org/>) reported that over a four-month period, more than 500 women contacted them for assistance in accessing mail-order abortion pills.

Women on Web is a non-profit organisation which provides abortion pills to countries in which 'access to safe abortion is restricted', and its founder Dr. Rebecca Gomperts has told The Independent (<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/people/rebecca-gomperts-meet-the-woman-travelling-the-world-delivering-abortion-drugs-by-drone-a7052306.html>)

that the organisation never breaks the law - she says the medicine is sent with prescription from their doctors, and that they only 'push the interpretation of laws and put them in a human rights framework.'



The law states that abortions in the UK require the approval of two medical professionals, and the two abortion inducing drugs must be administered at a registered clinic. The second drug, misoprostol, must not be taken at home. Women ordering the drugs and administering at home are therefore breaking the law and if found guilty could face life imprisonment under The Offences Against the Person Act 1861.

A woman explained (http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/staggering-number-of-women-seeking-abortion-pills-online-in-great-britain_uk_59c23ffce4b087fdf5094748) that she ordered pills to take at home because she lives too far from her nearest clinic: 'I do not live and cannot afford the public transport to attend the 3+ appointments that they require to complete the abortion.' She added, 'I'm really desperate and I've been told there is a three week wait, I'm really distressed and just want the procedure done as soon as possible with.'

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Another 30% of women gave their primary reason for taking abortion pills at home as being due to privacy and confidentiality concerns. One woman (http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/staggering-number-of-women-seeking-abortion-pills-online-in-great-britain_uk_59c23ffce4b087fdf5094748) told that she chose to take the pills as she'd had a medical abortion six years previously, and said she 'didn't like the fact I had to stay in hospital where I wasn't at all comfortable. I would much rather be in my own home with my partner there to support me.'

Women who are ineligible for free NHS abortions, for example if they are undocumented immigrants or have been admitted under a visa program, face the added stress of having to pay for their abortions, the minimum cost of which is around £545. Women who lack the money for this service are forced to consider purchasing the pills cheaper online.

There are still plenty of barriers preventing women from accessing safe clinical abortions in the UK, including waiting times which can span across weeks and in some cases can push someone over the time limit of being able to have a non-surgical abortion. For these reasons, women faced with this situation can feel they are lacking in options, and feel forced to turn to illegal measures to access a service that should be available to all.

A Department of Health spokesperson told Huffpost UK (<http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/staggering-number-of-women-seeking-abortion->



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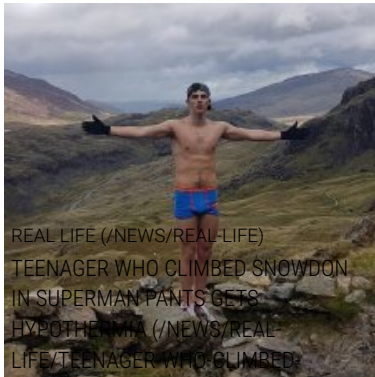
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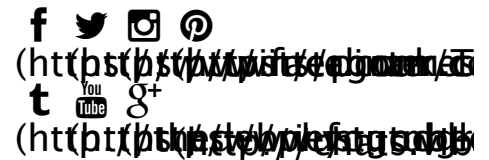
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