

Ending access to legal abortion has potentially deadly health consequences

Written by WisDems Press

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"Wisconsin physicians, not policymakers, are the best experts on reproductive healthcare in our state... In the words of one doctor, 'The overturn of Roe would be disastrous.'" - Doctors

MADISON, Wis. – Last week, after reports of a draft opinion that showed the Supreme Court is poised to overturn *Roe v. Wade*, medical professionals and scholars from the University of Wisconsin-Madison's School of Medicine and Public Health, Medical School, and Department of Anthropology [penned an op-ed in the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel](#) about the devastating consequences this would have for people across the state.

[Read the full article here](#) , or see key excerpts below:

Milwaukee Journal Sentinel: [Opinion | Ending access to legal abortion has potentially deadly health consequences for Wisconsin women](#)

- "If the U.S. Supreme Court overturns *Roe v. Wade* later this year, abortion would become criminalized in our state. An 1849 Wisconsin law would immediately become enforceable; this law deems both performing and obtaining abortions as felonies. Our research documents that physicians in our state overwhelmingly predict that *Roe*'s potential fall could have serious consequences for Wisconsinites' health and wellbeing."

- "In our professional roles at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, we conducted two different abortion-related studies of Wisconsin doctors. In one, we surveyed more than 900 physicians practicing at UW's School of Medicine and Public Health. Across all medical

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specialties, doctors overwhelmingly opposed legal restrictions on abortion healthcare services. For example, 91% said that women's healthcare in Wisconsin would get worse if Roe v. Wade were overturned and the state's abortion law took effect. More than 90% also expressed concern that restrictive abortion laws will make it difficult for patients to receive the care they need."

- "We also interviewed doctors who directly provide, or recently had provided, abortion healthcare in Wisconsin. Given their hands-on experience with reproductive healthcare delivery, these physicians offer a first-hand glimpse into the potential consequences of the criminalization of abortion in our state. Their concerns fall into three broad areas.

- "First, doctors predict a variety of negative physical and mental health outcomes among people forced to carry pregnancies to term. For example, given that full-term pregnancy and birth are associated with far more health risks than safe abortion, one doctor said that 'if Roe is overturned, more women will have more health problems, including all the complications that go with pregnancies, particularly unwanted pregnancies.'

- "Second, doctors are keenly aware of the potential impact of people turning to other options for abortion, both legal and extra-legal, especially since 'people are going to have abortions regardless' and 'women will do desperate things when they don't want to be pregnant.'

- "Third, doctors emphasize that Wisconsinites living in rural counties and/or living on low incomes will be the most disadvantaged by the overturning of Roe. As one said, 'wealthy patients would drive or travel to other states or other countries. Poor patients would try to access unsafe abortions.' Another said that 'there's no way abortion access will ever be equitable if Roe were overturned.'"

- "Wisconsin physicians, not policymakers, are the best experts on reproductive healthcare in our state. They express great concern that the criminalization of abortion would have multiple dangerous consequences for the health and wellbeing of pregnant Wisconsinites. In the words of one doctor, 'The overturn of Roe would be disastrous.'"

Jenny Higgins, PhD, MPH, is a professor of gender and women's studies and obstetrics and gynecology at the University of Wisconsin-Madison School of Medicine and Public Health. Laura Jacques, MD, is assistant professor of obstetrics and gynecology at the Medical School. Taryn Valley is an MD-PhD student at the Medical School and Department of Anthropology.