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## Newsletter February 2012

A message to fellow providers, referrers, and friends:

This past month I came across three informative articles dealing with important aspects of research in women's health. "Abortion Rates Higher Where it's Illegal", is an interesting article based on a recent study that showed abortion rates are actually higher in countries where the procedure is illegal. The article gives statistics on abortion rates in these countries and analyzes how these issues affect all women, even those living in the United States and Canada.

Secondly, "Contraceptive Recall Could Put Pfizer at Risk of Multi-million dollar Lawsuit, Attorney Says" is an article addressing the recent recall from Pfizer due to low potency levels in their birth control pills. This recall has been said to be the largest in recent years, and could leave Pfizer vulnerable to a multi-million dollar lawsuit.

Lastly, "Keep Baby's Sex Secret to Prevent Gender-based Abortions, Doc, Says" deals with the possible legislative changes that could require the sex of a woman's child remain a secret until after 30 weeks of pregnancy. Such a change is designed to be a preventative abortion measure and may conflict with the ethical issue of a woman having the right to obtain personal medical information.

As always, I hope you find this newsletter both interesting and informative.

Irving M. Feldkamp IV, MD

President

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### Abortion rates higher where it's illegal

More abortion in countries where procedure illegal and largely unsafe, study finds

By Maria Cheng, Associated Press

January 18, 2012 <msn.com>

LONDON — Abortion rates are higher in countries where the procedure is illegal and nearly half of all abortions worldwide are unsafe, with the vast majority in developing countries, a new study concludes.

Experts couldn't say whether more liberal laws led to fewer procedures, but said good access to birth control in those countries resulted in fewer unwanted pregnancies. The global abortion rate remained virtually unchanged from 2003 to 2008, at about 28 abortions per 1,000 women aged 15 to 44, a total of about 43.8 million abortions, according to the study.

The rate had previously been dropping since 1995. About 47,000 women died from unsafe abortions in 2008, and another 8.5 million women had serious medical complications. Almost all unsafe abortions were in developing countries, where family planning and contraceptive programs have mostly levelled off. "An abortion is actually a very simple and safe procedure," said Gilda Sedgh, a senior researcher at the U.S.-based Guttmacher Institute, designated by the World Health Organization as an official Collaborating Center for Reproductive Health. "All of these deaths and complications are easily avoidable," said Sedgh, the study's lead author. Sedgh and colleagues concluded that the proportion of unsafe abortions rose from 44 percent in 1995 to 49 percent in 2008, the last year for which statistics were available and studied in the report. Sedgh acknowledged it was difficult to get an accurate number for unsafe abortions in particular and described their estimates as modest. They used sources including official statistics, national surveys, and hospital records. To account for unreported abortions, they made adjustments and relied on information from other kinds of studies, expert assessments, and surveys of women.

The research was published Thursday in the journal, *Lancet*. Abortion rates were lowest in Western Europe — 12 per 1,000 — and highest in Eastern Europe — 43 per 1,000. The rate in North America was 19 per 1,000. Sedgh said she and colleagues found a link between higher abortion rates and regions with more restrictive legislation, such as in Latin America and Africa. They also found that 95 to 97 percent of abortions in those regions were unsafe. The authors defined unsafe abortion as any procedure done by people lacking needed skills or in places that don't meet minimal medical standards. Sedgh said some women in Africa resort to using broken soda bottles or taking strong doses of medicines or herbal drugs to induce abortions.

Find the rest of the article at [http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/46043957/ns/health-health\\_care/t/abortion-rates-higher-where-its-illegal/](http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/46043957/ns/health-health_care/t/abortion-rates-higher-where-its-illegal/)

