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Guttmacher/WHO Study Is Abortion Propaganda, Pro-Life Leader Says

Written by [Dave Bohon](#)

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A British-based pro-life leader said that a recent study by two influential organizations supposedly showing that “unsafe” abortions are on the rise is nothing more than pro-abortion propaganda.

According to the [Guttmacher Institute](#), Planned Parenthood’s de facto research arm, and the UN’s [World Health Organization](#) (WHO), from 2003 to 2008 the abortion rate fell ever-so-slightly from 29 to 28 per 1,000 women of child-bearing age. However, between 1995 and 2008 the numbers of “unsafe” abortions supposedly skyrocketed from 44 percent 49 percent.

By WHO’s definition, an abortion is considered “unsafe” when it is performed by an individual who has not been properly trained to dispatch pre-born babies, or when it is done in a sub-standard medical environment. Since abortion — “unsafe” or otherwise — comes with a whole host of possible complications, deaths among pregnant women undergoing the procedure have become an ever-increasing concern among global health “experts.”

Dr. Gilda Sedgh, a researcher at the Guttmacher Institute, explained that the increase in risky (to the mother) abortions is “because a growing proportion of abortions are taking place in the developing world.”

The Guttmacher/WHO study that produced the data found that in spite of an overall decline in the abortion rate globally, the number of abortions worldwide actually increased, from 41.6 million in 2003 to 43.8 million in 2008, due to an increasing global population.

As for the “unsafe” procedures, while “almost all reported abortions were deemed safe in North America and Europe,” noted [ABC News](#) in its report on the study, “nearly all abortions (97 percent) in Africa were considered unsafe in 2008.” Similarly, the majority of abortions “were performed under safe conditions in East Asia, but 65 percent were considered unsafe across south central Asia.”

The unspoken moral intended by the “unsafe” abortion finding was, apparently, that it is necessary to re-double efforts to make “safe” abortion more accessible, not just in “developing” (i.e., poverty-stricken) countries, but also in wealthy nations such as the United States, where in some cities abortion clinics are as plentiful as corner groceries once were, but where such obstacles such as lack of health insurance prevent some women from accessing the procedure.

Picking up on that theme, Dr. Lauren Streicher, an ob-gyn professor at Northwestern University’s medical school, contended to ABC News, “What we clearly know is that making abortion less available does not make it performed less often. It’s just more unsafe. Condemning abortion is a cruel and failed strategy.”

Streicher noted that 50 percent of “undesired” pregnancies happen because contraception failed. “Of those unplanned pregnancies, 50 percent resolve in abortion, so the need for abortion is always going to be there. By criminalizing it, you’re just increasing the amount of women who have poor and dangerous outcomes.”

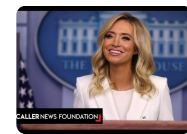
A second ob-gyn professor, Dr. Eva Lathrop of Emory University Schools of Medicine and Public Health, took up the cheer for increased access to abortion, telling ABC News that the “health of a society can be measured by the health of the women who are the backbone of that society, and

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when unsafe abortion rates are high, it is a general indication that the public health system is broken.”

Lathrop called abortion — rather than starvation, malnutrition, AIDS, or some other worldwide health menace — “the single most important global public health issue,” insisting that it is high time for world leaders to “have an ethical and open conversation addressing access to abortion as a human right and make swift policy changes towards destigmatization and legalization of abortion.”

Writing in the UK medical journal *The Lancet*, where the Guttmacher/WHO abortion study was published, Beverly Winikoff of *Gynuity*, a New York organization that promotes abortion, pontificated for access to a safe procedure, declaring that “unsafe abortion is one of the five major contributors to maternal mortality, causing one in every seven or eight maternal deaths in 2008.”

Yet, she added, “when abortion is provided with proper medical techniques and care, the risk of death is negligible and nearly 14 times lower than that of childbirth. The data continue to confirm what we have known for decades — that women who wish to terminate unwanted pregnancies will seek abortion at any cost, even if it is illegal or involves risk to their own lives.”

Dr Richard Horton, editor of *The Lancet*, added his wisdom on the matter of killing per-born children, calling the increase in “unsafe” abortions “deeply disturbing. The progress made in the 1990s is now in reverse. Condemning, stigmatizing and criminalizing abortion are cruel and failed strategies.”

In response to the chorus of doctors singing out for a world where abortion is frequent, legal, and safe, at least one pro-life leader countered the pro-abortion propaganda with truth. John Smeaton, director of the UK’s *Society for the Protection of Unborn Children* (SPUC), told *LifeSiteNews.com* that the numbers suggesting a rise in unsafe abortions are “dubious” at best.

“WHO routinely makes unsubstantiated claims about so-called ‘unsafe’ or illegal abortion,” Smeaton told LifeSite. “WHO is one of the world’s major pro-abortion bodies. The Guttmacher Institute is the research arm of the worldwide pro-abortion lobby. The report is pro-abortion propaganda, and should be dismissed as such.”

Smeaton noted that abortion-promoting organizations such as Guttmacher and WHO “have a proven track-record of making wildly exaggerated claims about the number of so-called ‘unsafe’ or illegal abortions.” He recalled that such false claims “were made in 1967 to lobby for the UK’s Abortion Act and in the 1970s to justify the U.S.’ *Roe v Wade* decision.”

In fact, the late Dr Bernard Nathanson, an early U.S. abortion advocate who later became a vocal pro-life leader, “admitted that he deliberately exaggerated the estimated number of illegal abortions five-fold when campaigning for abortion legalization,” said Smeaton.

In reality, statistics show that in countries where abortion is illegal, the maternal mortality rate is among the lowest in the world. LifeSite noted that “Poland, which banned abortion 20 years ago after communism fell, has seen maternal deaths drop by more than 40 percent, while the maternal mortality rate in El Salvador dropped by half after abortion was re-criminalized in 1998.”

By contrast, “South Africa, which has had one of the most permissive abortion laws in Africa since 1996, saw maternal deaths increase twenty percent from 2005 to 2007,” the pro-life website reported. “International Planned Parenthood Federation has acknowledged that part of this ‘surge’ is ‘due to complications of abortion,’ even though abortion is legal and therefore presumably ‘safe.’”

Said Smeaton: “The truth is that countries with strict laws against abortion have lower maternal death rates than countries which allow abortion widely.” Contrary to what the WHO study shows, and the pro-abortion professionals are aggressively pushing for, said the pro-life leader, “legalized abortion does nothing to improve medical care.”

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