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NBC News

Last doctor to provide abortions in Wyoming may leave the state

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People throughout Wyoming and Idaho drive hundreds of miles, sometimes through snow and rain, to get to a clinic at the base of the Teton Mountains in Jackson, Wyoming, to see Brent Blue.

Blue is the only doctor in the state who openly provides surgical and medication abortions, but soon his services may no longer be available there.

Abortion-rights activists say his absence would create a large gap in Wyoming's [health care options](#) and leave them more exposed to anti-abortion protesters who picket outside clinics and doctors' homes, sometimes damaging property or sending death threats.

While some doctors in Wyoming still discreetly provide abortions to a few longtime patients, Blue, 71, has advertised his services for decades in the sparsely populated state of [576,851](#).

"If I succumbed to the threats and the risk, the anti-choice people win, and women lose," Blue said. "If health care providers don't stand up for women's health care rights, who will?"

Blue sold the clinic he started 39 years ago, Emergacare, to St. John's Health in 2020. He remained there as a physician but resigned in October with a 120-day notice, claiming a hostile work environment. His last day is scheduled for Feb. 10.

St. John's Health did not respond to requests for comment.

Blue, who is divorced with three adult children, said he's considering moving to Idaho, where he believes it may be easier to establish a new clinic and would be closer to some of his patients than Jackson.



Dr. Brent Blue (Bradly J. Boner for NBC News)

He said he plans to sue St. John's next week and ask the court to void a stipulation in his contract that bars him from working in Teton County, Wyoming, for three years after he leaves the company.

But at this point, he's not even sure he will continue to practice medicine at all.

"It's quite emotional," said his physician's assistant, Duane Mortenson, 51, who has worked for Blue for three years. "I mean, it's really a bummer. I've worked with a lot of physicians during my time as a PA, and he's the best doctor that I've ever worked with and for."

Story continues

Blue is one of only two providers of medication abortions in Wyoming. Women typically cannot access medication abortions, administered by prescription pill, after 10 weeks of pregnancy, said Dr. Giovannina Anthony, a physician at the other provider, Women's Health and Family Care.

"Dr. Blue was really willing to stick his neck out, he was willing to advertise, and I think he was a lightning rod for the issue for many, many years here," said Anthony, adding that she considers abortion service an essential element of reproductive health care.

With Blue's possible exit on the horizon, anti-abortion activists have been anonymously calling Anthony's practice or standing outside, watching patients enter, she said, and there's not much she can do but ignore them and hope they go away.

Casey Cochran, 30, who has worked for Blue since 2019 as an office manager, said he grew used to the anti-abortion protesters who stood outside Emergacare, holding signs with violent images and vulgar language.

But he also saw a sign of Blue's character in a pride flag displayed outside the clinic's front door. Wyoming is "the reddest state in the nation" said Cochran, who struggled with coming out. The display showed him how accepting people could be.

"I knew he supported me, whether or not he knew it," Cochran said.

The new St. John's Family Health and Urgent Care occupies the same building as the now-shuttered Emergacare, but the pride flag is no longer there.

Blue, who has been described by colleagues as "a blue dot in a red sea," said he is offering a medical service that should be part of any well-rounded family care. He said he also counseled pregnant women on alternatives to abortion.



Dr. Brent Blue (Bradly J. Boner for NBC News)

"Sometimes it's right for somebody to be pregnant and to have a child, and other times it's not," he said. "It's up to that individual woman to make that decision. It's not up to me."

Although leaving his longtime patients will be difficult, he said he is more concerned about the future of medical services in his home state.

Lawmakers in the state will likely present anti-abortion bills during the February budget session, including a possible "Texas copycat bill" that would ban abortions after six weeks of pregnancy and another that would ban medication abortions, said Sharon Breitweiser, executive director at NARAL Pro-Choice Wyoming.

"All of them are bad public policy and bad for health care access," she said. "They're all very, very troubling."

With both the budget session drawing near, and possibly his last day practicing in Wyoming, Blue has been thinking lately about why he risked his safety to advocate for women's health. He remembers a long day in San Francisco at the start of his career when he used to make obstetric house calls.

After delivering a healthy baby, he sat down to an Italian dinner with the patient's family, surrounded by generations of women: the young mother who had just given birth, her mother, her grandmother and her great-grandmother. In tough moments, he looks back on that day and his question is answered.

"I've always felt that women's rights and women's health are an important issue," he said. "And I've never understood why women get the short end of the health care stick."

CORRECTION (Dec. 20, 2021, 11:20 a.m. ET): A previous version of this article misstated when Blue started his clinic. It was 39 years ago, not 19.

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Omicron Is Driving Up Demand for Rapid Tests

With demand for Covid-19 tests soaring amid an exploding Omicron wave, the White House on Tuesday is set to announce an effort to increase the availability of rapid tests in the country. Rapid test availability has emerged as a choke point in recent days in New York, where Omicron has led to a record-breaking number of new positive Covid-19 tests in the state each of the last four days. Pharmacies and online sellers are often sold out of rapid tests, driving the worried and the sick to testing sites seeking more-accurate PCR tests, which have seen extraordinarily long lines in recent days.

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The deal shows the Japanese conglomerate's ravenous need for cash and Apollo Global Management's push into lending, a territory traditionally dominated by banks.

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The Daily Beast

Make Your Holidays Sparkling

GettySparkling wine is the undisputed signature beverage of New Year's Eve. But the festive nature of the drink goes beyond a countdown to midnight. Bubbly is a welcome addition to all types of seasonal celebrations and works perfectly with a range of delicious holiday foods and desserts. To help make your season extra special this year, we asked three wine experts for their advice on how to serve and pair sparkling wine. Choose Your GlassSparkling wine is often served in an elegant flute—but a f



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[Ian Begley has the latest on Knicks, Ben Simmons, Deuce McBride and the team's front office | Begley's Mailbag](#)

SNY NBA Insider Ian Begley answers fan questions and provides insight into the latest topics circling the Knicks and the NBA. In this episode, Ian discusses the Knicks' potential pursuit of the 76ers' Ben Simmons, whether or not Miles 'Deuce' McBride has played himself into the rotation, and what the front office needs to address before they find themselves on the hot seat.

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[How Ravens going for two in loss to Packers impacts AFC North playoff picture | What Are The Odds?](#)

In What Are The Odds? presented by Caesars Sportsbook, Eamon McAnaney, Marc Malusis and Sal Licata debate the Baltimore Ravens decision to again go for a game-winning two-point conversion in Week 15 against the Green Bay Packers and for the second time in three weeks, absorb a critical loss because of it.

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[Jacob Trouba on COVID postponements, Gerard Gallant, Winter Olympics | Rangers News Conference](#)

In this Rangers news conference, defenseman Jacob Trouba discusses the team's extended break due to postponed games because of COVID. He feels the Rangers are fortunate to have had only one case, while other teams have been more deeply affected. Trouba also talked about whether he would play in the Winter Olympics, saying "there's definitely a risk., but there's the other side where players dream of playing in the Olympics their whole life."

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Why Saquon Barkley lacks bite, why Jets offense struggles with Zach Wilson | Football Night in NY

On SportsNite, Eamon McAnaney and Leger Douzable wonder if New York Giants running back Saquon Barkley has now become just an average running back, whether NY Jets quarterback Zach Wilson's terse response to a reporter asking him how much responsibility falls on him for the struggling offense is valid and why the Jets offense is seemingly not as efficient with Wilson, as it was with Mike White. Watch more SportsNite: <https://sny.tv/shows/sportsnite> About SportsNite: SportsNite takes viewers inside all things New York sports by discussing the latest sports news of the night.

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Sheldon Rankins breaks down Jets struggles on defense | Jets News Conference

New York Jets defensive lineman Sheldon Rankins addresses the porous run defense that has been an Achilles heel for the team all season long. Rankins: "Not enough negative plays, we need to keep teams behind the sticks...create some negative tackles behind the line of scrimmage." While admittedly frustrated, Rankins feels the unit has to lock in and keep growing. He's confident the younger players are gaining the experience necessary to eventually turn things around.

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How Buck Showalter's relationship with Francisco Lindor could pan out for Mets | Baseball Night in NY

On Baseball Night in NY, John Jastremski asks Jim Duquette how important Buck Showalter's relationship with New York Mets shortstop Francisco Lindor will be as the manager gets acclimated to the clubhouse. Watch more Baseball Night in NY:

<https://sny.tv/shows/baseball-night-in-ny> About Baseball Night in New York: On Baseball Night in New York, a cast of leading New York baseball writers and experts discuss the latest MLB baseball offseason news involving the New York Mets, NY Yankees, and key division rivals.

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Bloomberg

Stocks Rebound After Slump; Treasuries Decline: Markets Wrap

(Bloomberg) -- Stocks rose after the biggest three-day drop since September amid appetite for risk assets. Treasuries fell. Most Read from Bloomberg Moderna's Third Dose Boosts Antibodies Against Omicron Omicron Becomes Dominant U.S. Strain With 73% of Covid Cases S&P 500 Has Biggest Three-Day Drop Since September: Markets Wrap Turkish Lira Swings After Its Biggest Rally in 38 Years Billy Joel NYC Show Going Ahead; Quebec Closures: Virus Update Energy shares led gains in the S&P 500. Micron Technology

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GlobeNewswire

Picadeli, Europe's Leading In-Store Salad Bar Concept, Partners with Albertsons Companies on U.S. Debut to Make Fresh, Healthy Food Accessible and Affordable

Albertsons Companies brings innovative new offering to its fresh category, introducing U.S. consumers to Picadeli Salad Bar for first time Picadeli U.S. CEO Patrik Hellstrand Picadeli U.S. CEO Patrik Hellstrand is leading the company's growth of its tech-enabled salad bar offering in the U.S. LOS ANGELES, Dec. 21, 2021 (GLOBE NEWSWIRE) -- Picadeli, one of Europe's leading food tech companies dedicated to disrupting the healthy food industry, today announced its launch in the U.S. market through

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