

# Doctors call for end of abortion law

**Kat Lay**

A major medical college has backed calls to decriminalise abortion in a vote of its ruling council.

The Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RCOG) said the procedure should be regulated in line with other medical procedures, rather than subject to criminal law.

Abortion is illegal in England under a law dating back to 1861. The 1967 abortion act provided legal access to the procedure by setting out circumstances in which women seeking, and doctors performing it, would not face criminal sanctions, including life imprisonment. To be legal, an abortion must be carried out on registered premises with the agreement of two doctors.

There is growing concern that women are putting themselves at risk of criminal sanctions by buying abortion pills online. A study this week showed that more than 100 women from England, Wales and Northern Ireland approached one provider every month.

The RCOG represents most doctors performing abortions in the UK. In a statement, the college said: "Abortion services should be regulated; however, abortion... should be treated as a medical, rather than a criminal issue.

"The college is not calling for any change in gestational limits for abortion which should remain in place."

The college reached its decision in the face of a petition, signed by 160 doctors, not all RCOG members, who do not agree with decriminalisation and accused the council, which has 33 members, of being undemocratic by not putting the vote to its 6,000 members.

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