

Women's basic rights under threat from Trump gag rule, warn experts

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The Trump administration is mounting a ferocious attack on abortion rights with plans for a domestic gag rule on abortion counselling and provision, warn experts in *The BMJ* today.

Under this rule, clinics or programs that receive federal family planning funds "would be prohibited from providing abortions, referring women to places that do, or even counselling women that [abortion](#) is an option," explain Dr. Natalie Gladstein and colleagues at the University of Michigan.

Such funds currently go towards comprehensive healthcare services like contraception, cancer screening, and sexual transmitted disease (STD) treatment and are accessed by over 4 million Americans a year.

They point out that this rule is opposed by the US medical community, including the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG), the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), and the American College of Physicians (ACP).

And it is well documented that when this law is in effect "there are more unplanned pregnancies, more unsafe abortions, and more maternal deaths," they warn.

They point to a 2017 poll showing only 18% of Americans feel that abortion should be illegal in all or most instances, meaning the majority of Americans support a woman's right to safe, legal abortion.

The proposed rule therefore "imposes the conservative religious beliefs of a minority on the entire American population, directly contradicting the fundamental rights of freedom of speech and freedom of religion on which our nation was founded," they argue.

This rule also represents a gross interference in the patient-physician relationship, by preventing healthcare providers from giving their patients comprehensive, medically accurate information, they write.

It is also unclear whether the policy is actually legal under legislation that requires government to support "a broad range of acceptable and effective family planning services."

The authors acknowledge that plans to block the policy in federal court may not necessarily be bad for Republican politicians "since it could be used to energize their voters in the November elections." But they argue that the result of this proposed rule, should it be allowed to go into effect, is people will not get the health care they need.

"Everyone, regardless of their race, income, or where they live, deserves the best medical care and information available," they write. "Under this rule, they won't get it."

This partisan policy "is not based in medical fact or established law and will lead to poorer quality healthcare and less access to [health care](#). This is an attempt to take away women's basic rights. Period." they conclude.

More information: Opinion: Bringing the gag rule home: The Trump Administration wants to infringe women's rights to abortion counselling and doctors' rights to advise their patients,

[blogs.bmj.com/bmj/2018/06/13/b... bortion-counselling/](https://blogs.bmj.com/bmj/2018/06/13/b...-bortion-counselling/)

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