



Achala already had a four-year-old son when she discovered she was expecting, and she knew she couldn't keep a second child

Medico-Legal Aspects of Abortion

Dr. Asela Mendis

Learning outcomes....

- 1. To know the legal background of abortion in Sri Lanka.**
- 2. To define different types of abortions including criminal abortion**
- 3. To be able to understand the possible outcomes of unsafe abortions**
- 4. To know Different methods and complications of criminal abortion**
- 5. Be able to formulate cause of death**
- 6. Be able to do proper medico legal management of abortion**

Definition

- Legal

Legally, abortion (miscarriage) means the premature expulsion of the foetus from the mother's womb at any time of pregnancy, before full term of pregnancy is completed.

Definition
- Medical

**Expulsion of the products of
conception before 28 weeks of
pregnancy**

Classification:

(1) Natural:

(a) Spontaneous.

(b) Accidental.

(2) Artificial:

(a) Therapeutic.

(b) Criminal.



Sri Lanka's abortion laws are among the most restrictive in the world and attempts at legal reform are held up in parliament. Yet everyday hundreds of women are thought to obtain illegal abortions, risking their lives and long-term health.



The background features several thin, curved lines in shades of gray, some solid and some dashed, creating a sense of motion or a circular path. A large, bright green speech bubble is positioned on the left side, containing the text. The text is in a bold, black, serif font.

**OF THE CAUSING OF MISCARRIAGE, OR
INJURIES TO UNBORN CHILDREN, OF
THE EXPOSURE OF INFANTS, AND OF THE
CONCEALMENT OF BIRTHS**

Penal code

RAIDS

"The police cannot just arrest those who conduct such clinics without the permission of a Magistrate. So, once we get the tip, we place officers near the location and observe and collect enough information to request a warrant. Even with the warrant, we don't just charge. We use a decoy. We get a pregnant woman with the medical documents to prove that she is pregnant, to go to the clinic. Then we try to catch them red-handed. But this process is time consuming."
-SIP E. Jayarajya

Year	Number of Raids
2010	26
2011	15
2012	21
2013	26
2014	15
2015	21
2016	26

303.

Whoever voluntarily causes a woman with child to miscarry shall, if such miscarriage be not caused in good faith for the purpose of saving the life of the woman, be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to three years, or with fine, or with both ; and if the woman be quick with child, shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to seven years, and shall also be liable to fine.

Explanation.— A woman who . causes herself to miscarry is within the meaning of this section.

Penal code

RAIDS

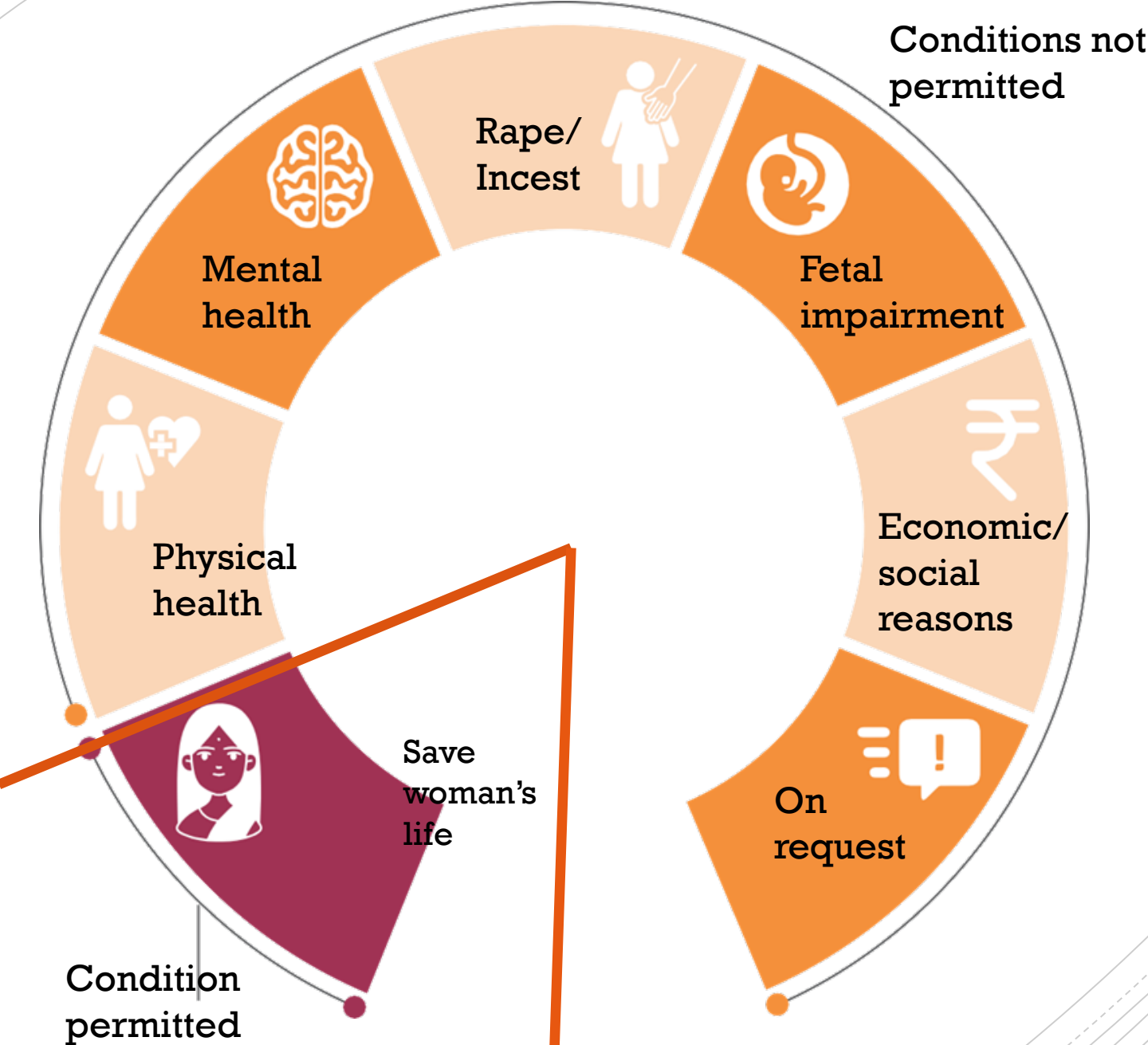
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- Sec. 304 - Miscarriage without woman's consent
- Sec. 305 - Death caused by an act done with intent to cause miscarriage.....
- Sec. 306 - Act done with intent to prevent a child being born alive or to cause it to die after birth...
- Sec. 307- Causing the death of a quick unborn child by an act – is culpable homicide.....

Abortion laws and policies



CRIMINAL ABORTION

Criminal abortion is the unlawful expulsion of the fetus by artificial means. It is a felony when any person advises, assists in or performs an abortion.



1908 drawing.
"Abortionist with a Lady"
by Charles Leandre

Laws pertaining to abortion in Sri Lanka remain restrictive. Abortion is illegal unless the life of the mother is at risk.

Natural:

(a) Spontaneous

(b) Accidental

Abortion may occur at any time due to natural causes. Abortion occurs in 10 to 15% of all pregnancies and is most common about the second or third month.

Advanced maternal age

Previous spontaneous abortion

Medications & substances (smoking)

Mechanisms responsible for abortion: not apparent

Death of fetus precedes spont. expulsion, finding cause involves ascertaining the cause of fetal death

Maternal causes:

Systemic

Acute infections -rubella etc.

Chronic infections- TB

Toxic- lead...

Chronic diseases- HT, Ht Dise:

Psychological

Physical trauma

Maternal causes:

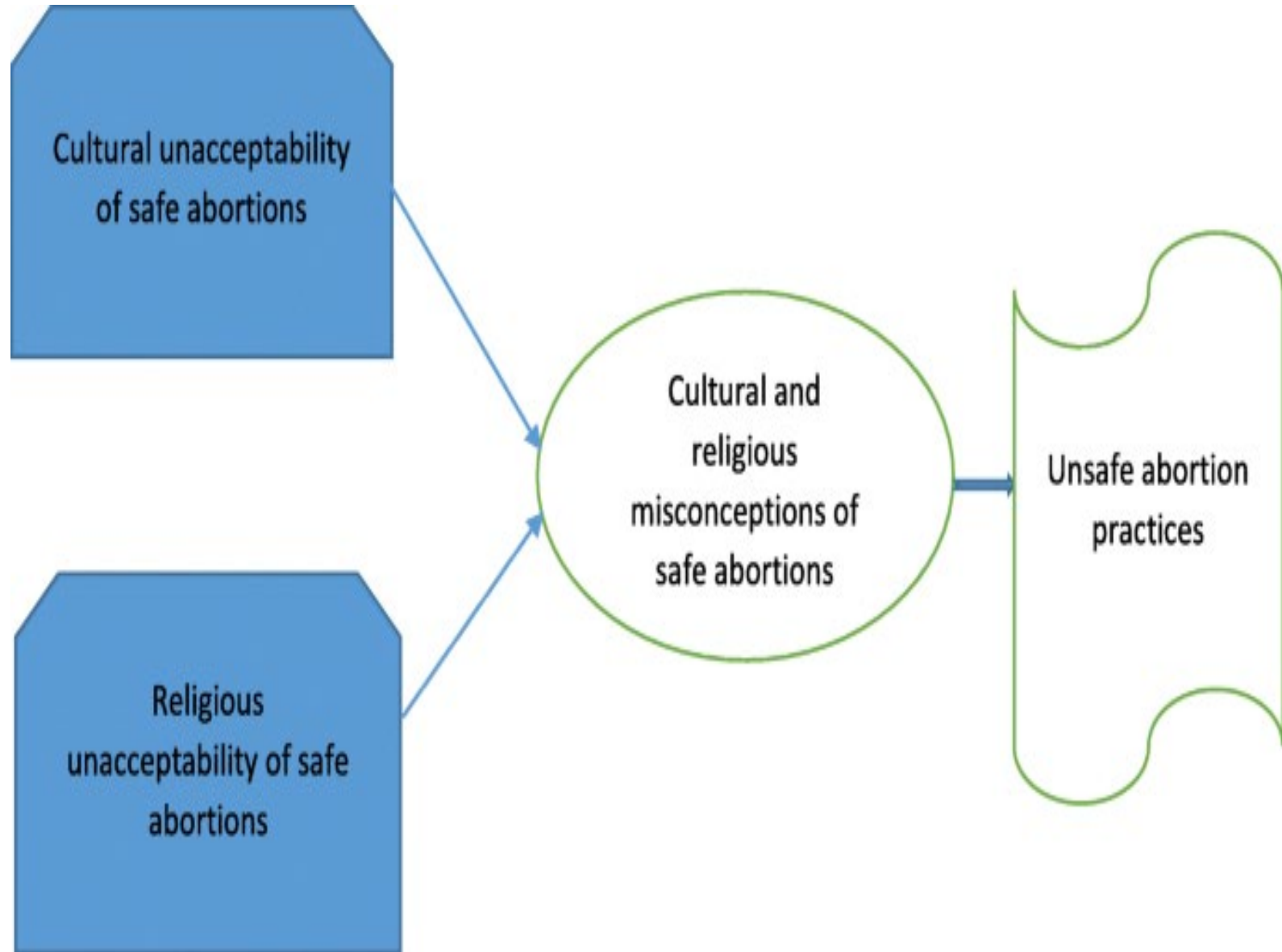
Local

- **Fibroids**
- **PID**
- **Endometritis**
- **Uterine abnormalities**

Foetal causes:

- **Congenital anomalies**
- **Death of foetus**
- **H-mole**
- **Placental disease**

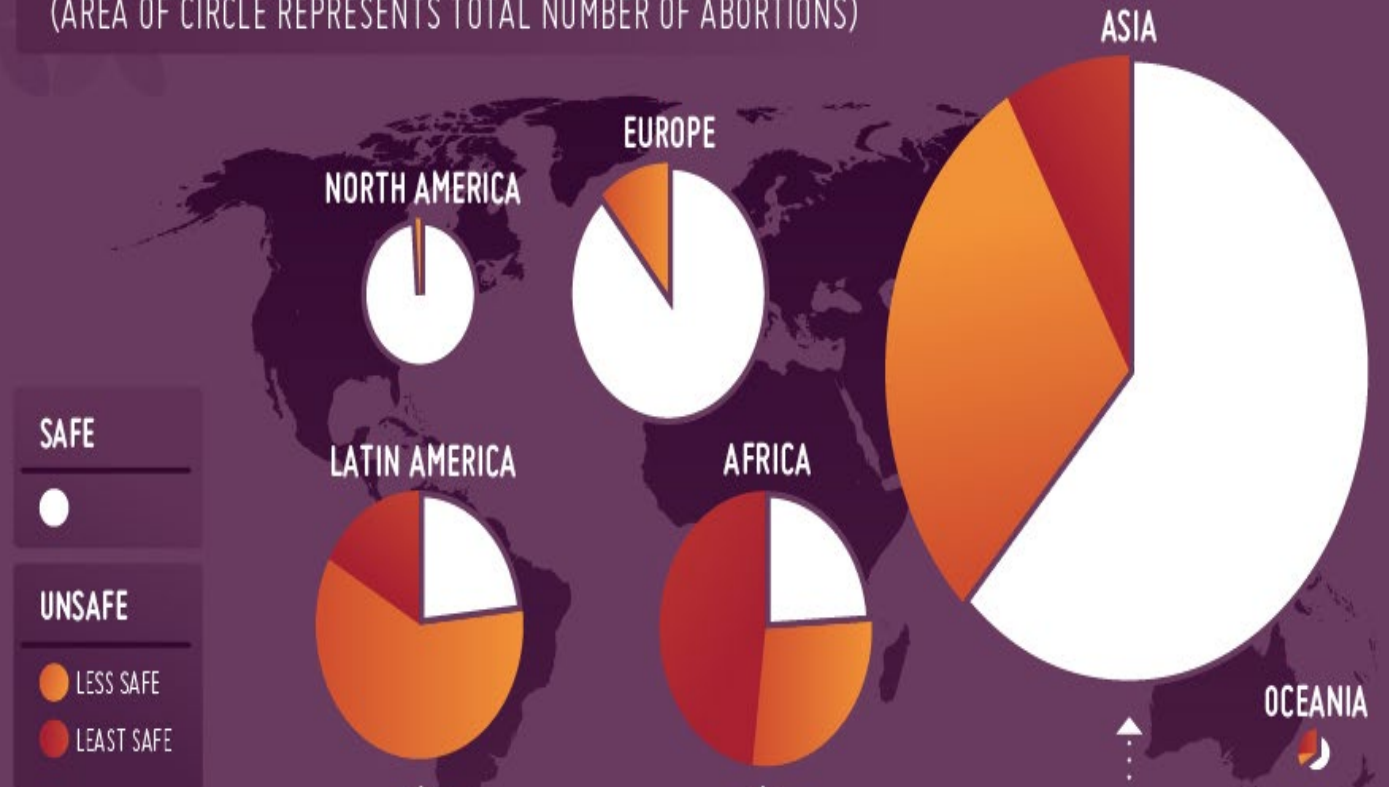
Unsafe Abortions



Unsafe Abortions

DISTRIBUTION OF ABORTIONS

(AREA OF CIRCLE REPRESENTS TOTAL NUMBER OF ABORTIONS)



SAFE



UNSAFE



LESS SAFE



LEAST SAFE

NORTH AMERICA

EUROPE

LATIN AMERICA

AFRICA

ASIA

OCEANIA

Three quarters of all abortions in Latin America are unsafe.

In Africa **nearly half** of all abortions happen in the least safe circumstances. The risk of dying from an unsafe abortion is the highest in Africa.

The largest number of unsafe abortions occur in Asia, most of them in south and central Asia.

ABORTION TYPE by pregnancy week

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20

METHOTREXATE
AND MISOPROSTOL

Up to 7 weeks

MEDICAL ABORTION

Up to 10 weeks

VACUUM ASPIRATION

Up to 16 weeks

DILATION AND
EVACUATION

After 14 weeks

INDUCTION:
SECOND TRIMESTER

13 to 27 weeks

healthline



SURGICAL

It can be performed later in the pregnancy



The procedure takes less than 15 minutes



Usually only requires one clinic visit



Usually involves less bleeding and cramping



Completely supervised by medical staff



Can be performed under sedation, which reduces pain and awareness



Very low complication rate, and a high success rate



Allows you to continue breastfeeding



MEDICAL

Doesn't require anaesthetic



A non-invasive procedure



A high level of privacy and autonomy



None of the associated surgical risks



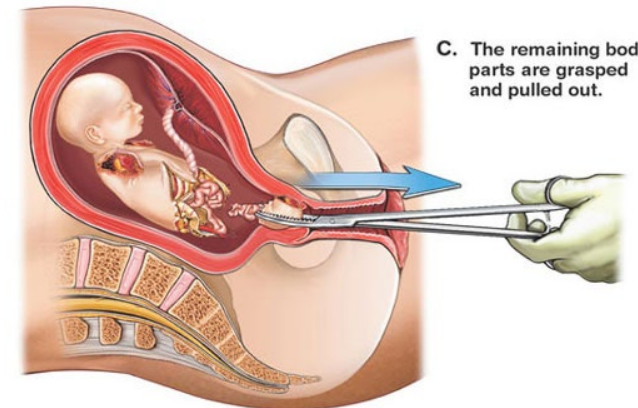
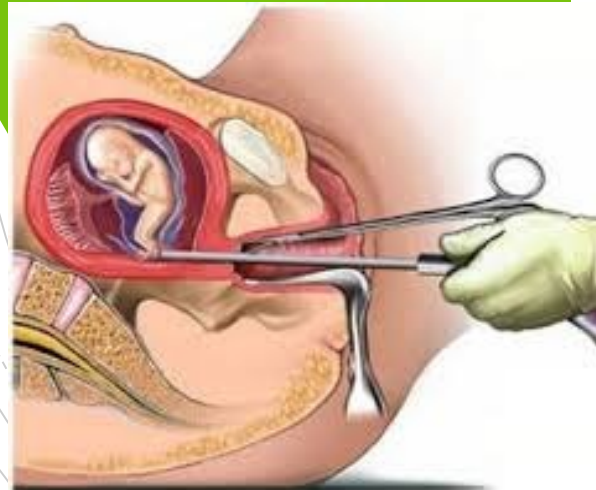
Can feel more 'natural' and is similar to a heavy period or miscarriage



You're at home and can have the support of friends and/or family



There are telehealth options available if you are unable to travel to one of our clinics



C. The remaining body parts are grasped and pulled out.

THE METHODS OF PROCURING CRIMINAL ABORTION



Methods used in criminal abortions

- **Depends on the experience of the abortionist**
- **Depends on the duration of pregnancy**

Methods

- **Oral**
- **External methods**
- **Injections**
- **Local irritants**
- **Instrumental methods**

Oral

- Ergot
- Quinine
- Purges
- Lead
- Oestrogens

A green speech bubble graphic with a tail pointing downwards and to the right, containing the text 'External methods'.

External methods

- **Physical violence**
- **Strenuous exercise**
- **Cupping**

Injections

- **Pituitary extracts**
- **Intra-uterine saline**
- **Prostaglandin**

Local irritants

- **Vaginal douching**
- **KMnO₄**
- **Utus paste**

Instrumental & Mechanical methods

- **Higginson syringe**
- **Syringe suction**
- **Curettage**
- **Dilators**
- **Vacuum extraction**
- **Penetrating instruments**
- **Chorionic separation.**
- **Insertion of castor stems.**

Complications

GUTTMACHER INSTITUTE

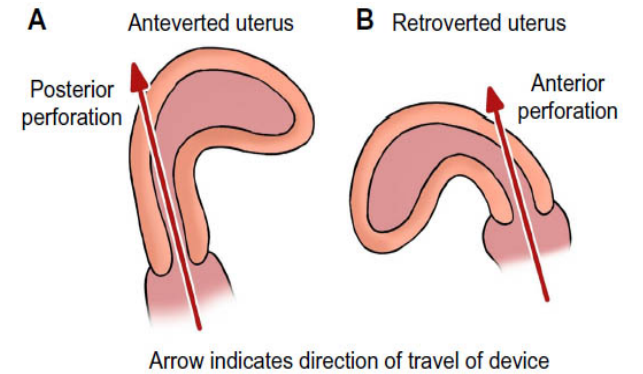
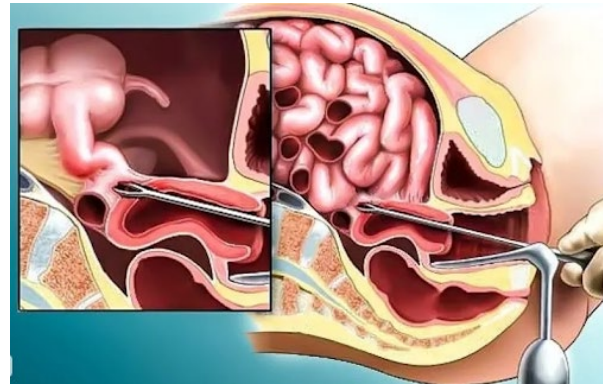
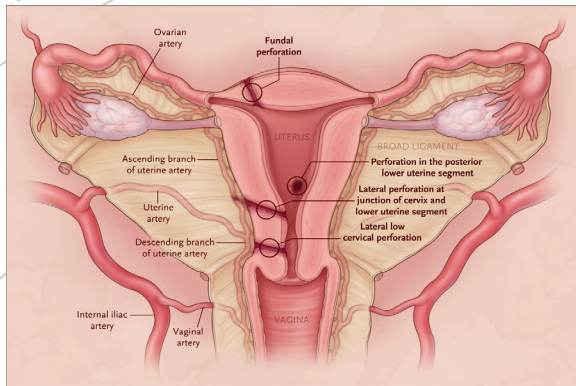
IN THE DEVELOPING WORLD

6.9 million women are treated yearly for complications from unsafe abortions.

More than 22,000 die from complications each year.

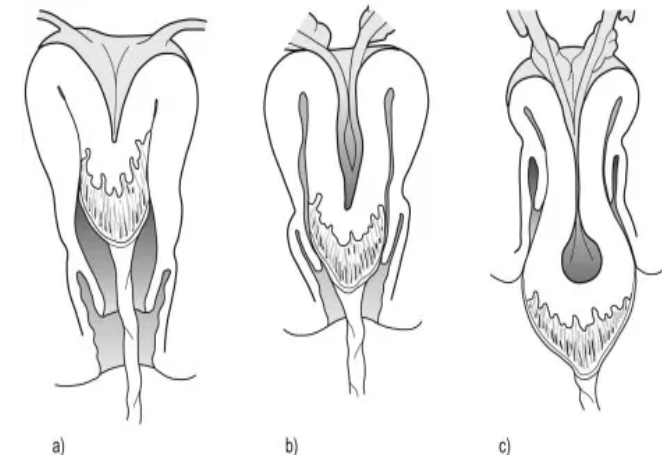
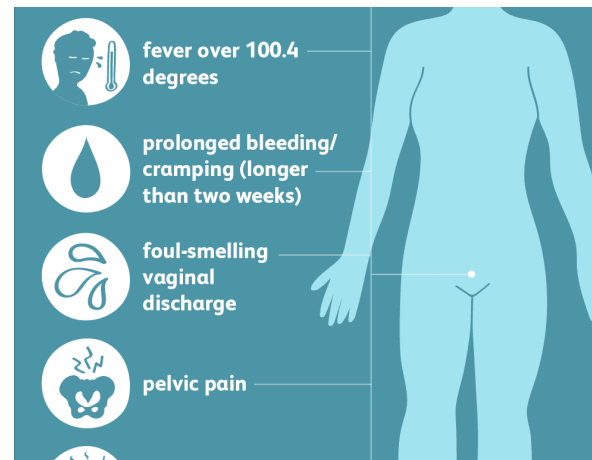
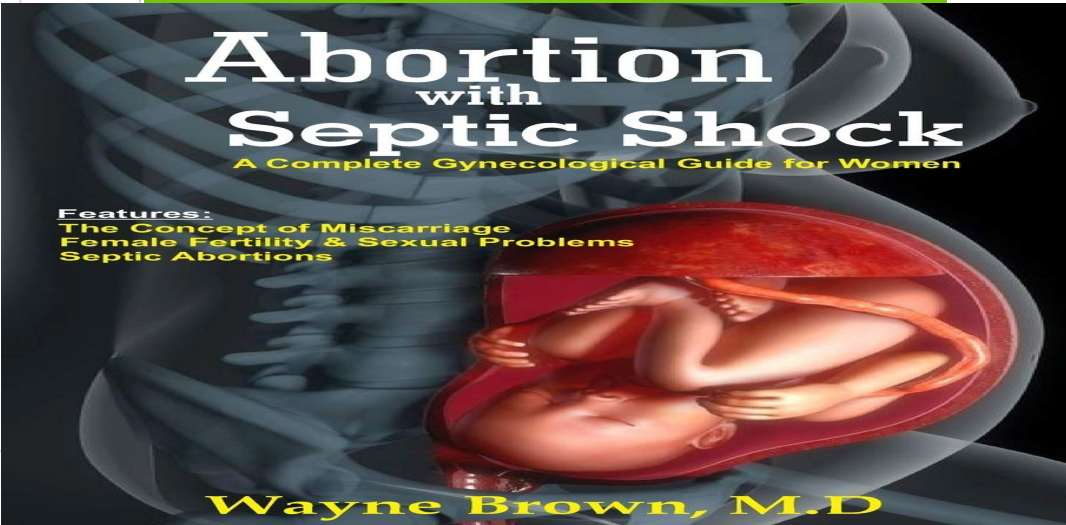


**Restrictive
Abortion
Laws Endanger
Women's
Health**



Causation of complications

Common infections after abortion and how to avoid them



Complications

- **Drugs- toxic effects**
- **Intra abdominal injuries due to use of 'violence'**
- **CNS lesions- use of hypertonic saline.**
- **Air embolism**
- **Infections- salpingitis, endometritis. peritonitis, septicaemia**

Complications

- **Vagal shock**
- **Uterine haemorrhage.**
- **Cervical necrosis.**
- **Perforation- vaginal, uterine..**
- **Involution/inversion of uterus.**
- **Anaemia**

Causes of death

- **Haemorrhage and shock**
- **Neurogenic shock due to pain.**
- **Peritonitis.**
- **Air embolism**
- **Amniotic fluid embolism**
- **Uterine rupture**
- **Uterine inversion.**
- **Renal failure**

Causes of death

- **Septicaemia**
- **Tetanus**
- **Gas gangrene**
- **Poisoning**



**Medico legal
management:**

- **Examine the mother-clinical**
- **Examine the products of conception/child**
- **Autopsy of the deceased.**

**Examination of the
pregnant woman
clinical or autopsy**

- **Obtain consent.....**
- **Signs of pregnancy- abdominal enlargement, striae, breast enlargement, milk secretion**
- **Signs of delivery - bleeding PV, dilatation of cervix, open os, genital injuries, foetal parts in the birth canal etc**

Examination of the pregnant woman clinical or autopsy

- **Signs of intervention - Injuries to cervix, presence of foreign bodies, instrument marks**
- **Signs of complications - infections, jaundice,**
- **Scene visit-if possible**
- **Relevant investigations- Bld. Culture, x-ray, microscopy etc.**



Thank you