

## WEN Cafe: Women's Reproductive and Sexual Health in the #Covid19 Crisis

17<sup>th</sup> April 2020

### Summary of discussion

Our two speakers were Dr Olwen Williams, OBE, Consultant Physician in Genitourinary/HIV Medicine and Dr Jane Dickson, Vice President of The Faculty of Sexual and Reproductive Healthcare and Consultant in Sexual & Reproductive Healthcare, ABHB. They shared info from the front line how women's reproductive and sexual health is being impacted by the crisis.

- There are **MANY women who are not presenting e.g. re heart disease / stroke / chronic diseases** who are seriously ill but too scared to go to hospital – message must be put out that they must go to hospital
- **Giving birth alone – actually this should not be the case that women have to give birth alone** – must get this message out – women can have a birth partner as long as they DO NOT have Covid 19. If they have symptoms women will be asked to have another birth partner
- **Increase of around 50% of women having abortions during this time** in Wales– not because they are locked down at home, but because **they are really concerned around being pregnant during a health crisis AND they are concerned about their finances and having enough money to raise a child**
- How we prepare for out of lockdown – may well be overwhelming numbers of cases of women coming forward both later in pregnancy term due to abuse / violence / rape and need for abortions, and secondly due to chronic illness
- When lockdown raised, how will we prioritise health concerns for those who have not presented yet, and who's appointments were cancelled? Need to think about this now
- Digital medicine can exclude some people BUT can also promote access – **which bits will we keep post covid-19?**
- To detect abuse / violence, when using tele-medicine a 'code word' is used so that nurses can identify abortion coercion / or violence and can ask the woman if they would like the police to be called
- There will be a big rise in need of mental health support for both nurses / carers and families who lose loved ones
- In the longer term, the Chair asked if either of the speakers were First Minister and they could wave a magic wand, what was the one thing they would do to improve women's health equality. Dr Jane Dickson said she would like a specialist in Woman's health at EVERY GP practice in Wales and Dr Olwen Williams would like all doctors during training to be taught about gender and inequality from the off-set so they are aware of this and seek to route out inequality throughout their careers.