A new study of the medical records for nearly half a million women in Denmark reveals significantly higher maternal death rates following abortion compared to delivery. This finding has confirmed similar large-scale population studies conducted in Finland and the United States, but contradicts the widely held belief that abortion is safer than childbirth.

By linking records from Denmark’s fertility and abortion registries to death registry records, the researchers, including Elliot Institute Director Dr. David Reardon, examined death rates following the first pregnancy outcome for all women of reproductive age in Denmark over a thirty year period, charting death rates at 180 days, 1 year, and in each of 10 subsequent years following each woman’s first pregnancy outcome.

Significantly higher rates of death were observed among women who aborted in every time period examined (see table). Overall, the study found that women who had first-trimester abortions had an 89 percent higher risk of death within the first year and an 80 percent higher risk of death over the full time period studied.

Published in the Medical Science Monitor, this is the first record linkage study of maternal death rates associated with abortion to be published using Denmark’s centralized health data. Record linkage studies of the population of Finland and of low income women in California have also found higher death rates associated with abortion.

Record Linkage Studies Eliminate Reporting Errors

The findings of these record linkage studies from three different populations contradict the conclusion that abortion is safer than childbirth. That view has traditionally been based on death certificates alone or on voluntary reporting to government agencies.

For example, a study published in February in the journal Obstetrics & Gynecology using that method concluded that the death rate associated with childbirth is 14 times higher than the death rate associated with abortion.

According to Reardon, the study published in February was an “apples versus oranges” comparison of two very incomplete and incomparable sets of data.

“Doctors and other officials completing death certificates almost never know if the deceased had a history of abortion,” Reardon said. “Record linkage, such as we have done, is the only way to objectively identify and compare death rates associated with pregnancy outcome using the same yardstick.”

The inaccuracy of traditional tallies of pregnancy-associated death was underscored by a 2004 study using Finland’s national health care data. The researchers found that only 27 percent of pregnancy-associated deaths could have been identified by looking at death certificates alone. Deaths associated with abortion were the most likely to be missed.

Abortion Safety Bias Confounds Public Discussion

Reardon said the February study was “worse than a junk in, junk out analysis” because its authors excluded record linkage studies, all of which contradicted their claim that childbirth is 14 times more dangerous than abortion, from their literature review. He believes that evidence of abortion-associated risks is being suppressed for ideological and political reasons.

“Population control activists in the United States and Europe, governments, NGO’s, and academic circles are pressuring developing countries to legalize abortion,” he said. “Their long-standing documented objective is to reduce birth rates among the poor. But that objective is being disguised by the more politically correct sales pitch which asserts that abortion is safer than childbirth and represents a positive benefit to women’s health. Any evidence which undermines that sales pitch is
therefore doggedly ignored or suppressed.”

Reardon believes the higher rates of maternal mortality associated with abortion may be largely due to elevated rates of psychological stress associated with abortion.

For example, the mortality studies in Finland found a three-fold increased risk of suicide in the first year following an abortion compared to the general population and a six-fold higher risk compared to women who gave birth. The highest suicide rate was within two months of the abortion.

In the California studies, women with a history of abortion had higher rates of psychiatric treatment over a four-year study period and were 187 percent more likely to die of heart diseases, which can also be affected by stress.

“Numerous studies have linked abortion to higher rates of substance abuse, self-destructive behavior, psychiatric hospitalization, sleep disorders, eating disorders and a general increase in treatments sought for medical care,” said Reardon. “More research is needed to explore how these or other pathways may help to explain the higher mortality rates observed in record linkage studies.”

* * *

**Studies Mentioned**


**CDC Reports of Abortion Deaths Double; Many Deaths Go Uncounted**

A recent report on abortion released by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) noted that, “In 2008, the most recent year for which data were available, 12 women were reported to have died as a result of complications from known legal induced abortions.” The number of reported abortion-related deaths doubled from the year before, when six deaths were reported.

The real number of deaths is, without a doubt, much higher. Researchers looking at death records for women in the years following pregnancy in the United States, Finland and—most recently—Denmark, found higher rates of death among women who had abortions compared to women who gave birth. And researchers and others have repeatedly reported serious flaws with how abortion deaths are counted in the U.S.

Indeed, in response to a letter questioning the appropriateness of comparing maternal mortality statistics for childbirth with the CDC’s reported mortality statistics for abortion, the director of the CDC wrote in July of 2004 that maternal mortality rates and abortion mortality rates “are conceptually different and are used by the CDC for different public health purposes.”

* * *

You can learn more about maternal abortion deaths at www.afterabortion.org/category/research/mortality.
A single induced abortion increases the risk of maternal death by 45 percent compared to women with no history of abortion, according to a new study of all women of reproductive age in Denmark over a 25 year period.

In addition, each additional abortion is associated with an even higher death rate. Women who had two abortions were 114 percent more likely to die during the period examined, and women had three or more abortions had a 192 percent increased risk of death.

Elevated rates of death were also observed among women who experienced miscarriages, ectopic pregnancies or other natural losses.

Women with a history of successful deliveries were the least likely to die during the 25 years examined. Women who had never been pregnant had the highest mortality rate.

Among women with a history of multiple pregnancies, women with a history of both abortions and natural losses, but no live births, had the highest mortality rate.

"Dose Effect" Supports Causal Link

The finding that each additional abortion or other pregnancy loss contributed to a rising death rate is an indication that the observed effects are more likely to be causal than incidental, according to Elliot Institute Director Dr. David Reardon, one of the co-authors of both studies.

“We knew from our previous studies of low income women in California that women who have multiple pregnancy outcomes, such as having a history of both abortion and miscarriage, have significantly different mortality rates,” Reardon said. “But this new study is the first to examine how each experience with abortion or miscarriage contributes to higher mortality rates.”

This is called a “dose effect” because “each exposure, or ‘dose,’ is seen to produce more of the same effect, which is what one would expect if there is a cause-effect relationship,” Reardon explained.

Reardon believes further research is needed to explore how the outcomes observed in this latest study may be influenced by abortion’s impact on natural pregnancy losses. A new population study from Finland, for example, has found that abortion is associated with higher rates of preterm delivery, low birth weight delivery, and perinatal deaths in subsequent pregnancies.

Reardon believes that a truer picture of the benefits of childbirth and the risks of abortion and pregnancy loss is now emerging because of a shift to more reliable record linkage studies. Such studies have been conducted in Finland, Denmark and the United States.

Before these record linkage studies were available, efforts to compare the mortality rates associated with abortion and childbirth were usually based on death certificates alone. Reardon characterized those previous comparisons as “junk in, junk out” analyses because death certificates have been proven to be notoriously inaccurate in regard to women’s reproductive history, especially in regard to any history of abortion or miscarriage.

“Record linkage studies are the only way to use the same objective yard stick for comparing mortality rates associated with pregnancy outcomes,” he said. “More researchers and more research dollars should be expended on investigating these issues. Without it, population control efforts in developing countries may lead to ill-informed public health initiatives which will actually increase death rates among women rather than reduce them.”

* * *

Studies Referenced

Coleman PK, Reardon DC, Calhoun BC. Reproductive history patterns and long-term mortality rates: a Danish, population-based record linkage study Eur J Public Health, first published online September 5, 2012.


Abortion and Sexual Assault Pregnancy: Listening to Women Who’ve Been There

Abortion Doesn’t Help Pregnant Sexual Assault Victims, Say Women Who’ve Been There
Survey Says Most Don’t Want Abortion; Say It Adds to Trauma

As the furor continues over the Missouri Rep. Todd Akin’s remarks that pregnancy from rape is very rare, one very important thing is being overlooked: what do women who have actually been there have to say about this issue?

There has been very little research conducted to date on the experiences of women who became pregnant as a result of rape or incest. One of the few surveys ever done was conducted by the Elliot Institute for our book, *Victims and Victors: Speaking Out About Their Pregnancies, Abortions and Children Resulting From Sexual Assault*.

The book was based on letters and survey responses from 192 women who became pregnant as a result of rape or incest. 164 were victims of rape and 28 were victims of incest (sexual assault involving a family member). Overall, 69 percent continued the pregnancy and either raised the child or made an adoption plan, 29 percent had abortions and 1.5 percent had miscarriages.

**What the Research Says**

The survey of women who contributed to the book found that:

- Nearly 80 percent of the women who aborted the pregnancy reported that abortion had been the wrong solution.
- Most women who had abortions said that abortion only increased the trauma they were experiencing.
- In many cases, the victim faced strong pressure or demands to abort. 43 percent of rape victims who aborted said they felt pressured or were strongly directed by family members or health workers to abort.
- In almost every case where an incest victim had an abortion, it was the girl’s parents or the perpetrator who made the decision and arrangements for the abortion, not the girl herself. In several cases, the abortion was carried out against her expressed wishes, and in a few cases, without her being aware that she was pregnant or that an abortion was taking place.
- None of the women who gave birth to a child conceived in sexual assault expressed regret or wished they had aborted instead.1

Studies that examine risk factors for psychological problems after abortion show that women with a history of sexual assault or abuse are more likely to have difficulty coping after abortion.

**Women Sign Petition for Congressional Hearings**

More than 30 women have signed a petition asking congress and state legislators to hold hearings and give women a chance to tell their stories, discuss the impact of abortion and share their unique needs and concerns. They note that discussions by “legislators, judges and policy makers” on this issue “take place without ever first soliciting our input,” and that abortion promotion stops women from receiving help and support.

These views are expressed in their petition, which reads in part:

We are deeply offended and dismayed each time our difficult circumstances are exploited for public consumption to promote the political agenda of others. This is a grave injustice. In pursuing their political agendas, these exploiters have reduced our concerns, needs and circumstances to a crude caricature. …

Only we who have actually experienced a sexual assault pregnancy truly understand the trauma, fears, concerns and needs of our sisters who are, or will someday become, pregnant as a result of rape or incest.

Each year, thousands of women will face this experience. Unless society at large begins to listen to us today, these other women will, like us, face great difficulty in finding authentic understanding and help.

The petition signers include women who had abortions as well as women who continued their pregnancies and either raised their children or placed them for adoption.

One woman was impregnated by her stepfather at the age of 12. Her mother, who knew of the abuse, took her for an abortion that resulted in the delivery of a dead baby girl. Years later, she wrote:
Throughout the years I have been depressed, suicidal, furious, outraged, lonely, and have felt a sense of loss . . . The abortion which was to “be in my best interest” just has not been. As far as I can tell, it only “saved their reputations,” “solved their problems,” and allowed their lives to go merrily on. . . . Problems are not ended by abortion, but only made worse.

Another woman, who raised her son after being raped as a teen, wrote that she believed abortion advocates have exploited stories like hers:

I having lived through rape, and also having raised a child “conceived in rape,” feel personally assaulted and insulted every time I hear that abortion should be legal because of rape and incest. I feel that we’re being used to further the abortion issue, even though we’ve not been asked to tell our side of the story.

* * *

See the petition at www.afterabortion.org/rapepregnancypetition. Women who have experienced a pregnancy resulting from rape or incest and who wish to sign the petition can sign online or by emailing elliotinstitute@gmail.com. Those who wish to show their support for WPSA can also do so by visiting the petition page. You can also show your support by “liking” the Facebook page at www.facebook.com/supportwpsa.

An Open Letter to Congress, State Legislators and the Media

We are members of the Ad Hoc Committee of Women Pregnant by Sexual Assault (WPSA). This group was formed eight years ago to petition Congress to hold hearings on the issue of abortion in cases of pregnancy resulting from rape or incest. So far, however, this petition has not been heard by political leaders on either side of the aisle, or by most in the pro-choice or pro-life communities.

Many people have strong opinions about abortion in cases of pregnancies resulting from rape or incest. However, the real experiences and needs of women who have actually experienced pregnancies from sexual assault are often ignored, even though our experiences are frequently used to promote abortion on demand.

Recently, there has been a lot of controversy surrounding remarks made by Congressman Todd Akin about abortion and rape. From the perspective of those of us who have actually been through a pregnancy resulting from rape or incest, people on both sides of the abortion debate, and the media fanning the flames of this controversy, are getting it wrong.

On one side are those who argue that pregnancies resulting from rape and incest occur so rarely that we shouldn’t let it impact public policy on abortion. This is hurtful to women who do become pregnant from rape or incest and who need support. It can also lead to questioning as to whether a woman or girl is telling the truth about being raped.

On the other side are those who perpetuate the myth that women and girls who become pregnant from sexual assault overwhelmingly want, need and benefit from having abortions. This also hurts women and fans the flames of prejudice toward those who do not want to have an abortion, even leading some to question whether a woman or girl who wishes not to abort has “really” been raped. And it can lead to strong pressure to abort by those who think the woman or girl does not know what is really best for her.

Despite the belief that most women in such circumstances would want an abortion, a national study published in the American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology found that only half of those who became pregnant from rape had an abortion. Another survey of pregnant sexual assault victims found that only 30 percent had abortions.

Whether the true number is closer to 30 or 50 percent doesn’t matter. What matters is that women and girls who become pregnant from rape or incest need real support and resources that meet their needs. In many cases, however, these needs are not met because most people assume that abortion will solve the problem.

In fact, there are no studies proving that this claimed psychological benefit occurs in general, or even for certain groups of women pregnant by sexual assault. And from personal experience, many of us discovered that abortion only added to our trauma and created additional obstacles to finding healing.

Many people naturally fear themselves or someone they love being raped, or becoming pregnant as a result of rape. We have been on the other side of that fear. From our perspective the issues and emotions involved are not as straightforward as most people presume. This is why those of us who have actually been in this situation need and deserve to be heard.

Delving into these issues properly requires more than time and space that can be given to it here. And that is exactly why we are calling for Congressional hearings to give us a chance to finally be heard.

It is our hope that the media attention given to this controversy over Rep. Akin’s comments will present an opportunity to break

Continued on page 6
The Despicable “God Intends Rape” Comments
David C. Reardon

The accusations that Indiana U.S. Senate candidate Richard Mourdock believes “God intends pregnancies resulting from rape” reveal a despicable attitude toward justice and truth.

But even worse, the commentary and debate taking place about rape pregnancies is profoundly hurtful to both women who became pregnant through rape and their children.

While the comments may not be intended to hurt, they reflect a profound ignorance and disregard of the real needs and interests of women who have experienced pregnancies resulting from rape.

As Kathleen DeZeeuw, a woman who raised a son conceived in rape, wrote in the book Victims and Victors: Speaking Out About Their Pregnancies, Abortions, and Children Resulting from Sexual Assault:

I, having lived through rape, and also having raised a child “conceived in rape,” feel personally assaulted and insulted every time I hear that abortion should be legal because of rape and incest. I feel that we’re being used to further the abortion issue, even though we've not been asked to tell our side of the story.

Her feelings are shared by many women who have experienced pregnancies resulting from rape or incest. Following the publication of Victims and Victors, for which I was one of the editors, a number women who contributed their stories to the book banded together to form the Ad Hoc Committee of Women Pregnant by Sexual Assault (WPSA).

For the last eight years, WPSA has been petitioning Congress to hold hearings at which women who have actually been pregnant following rape or incest could tell policy makers and the media what their experiences were truly like, and what they and other women facing such a situation really want and need.

The average person might think that WPSA’s efforts would be supported by legislators and people on both sides of the abortion debate. One might also think, given all the media attention devoted to the statements that Todd Akin and Richard Mourdock have made regarding rape pregnancies, that once these political stories broke, the major media would be eager to interview WPSA members for their thoughts on these issues.

Instead, WPSA spokeswomen are getting zero calls. The media and many politicians and leaders on both sides of the abortion debate continue to ignore WPSA and their petition.

Why? Because their stories don't easily fit into the already well-established narrative of how abortion in cases of sexual assault is traditionally debated.

Open Letter, from page 5

Women who have had pregnancies resulting from sexual assault should be given a leadership role in discussing this important issue. However, most of the debate surrounding this issue has taken place without input from us or other women like us.

We are especially concerned — and offended — when our circumstances are exploited to promote abortion on demand, especially when there is no platform being offered for us to voice our real needs and concerns.

Our situation is not uncommon, and our needs are worthy of public notice and discussion in terms of public policy and health care directives.

The members of WPSA do not claim to know all the answers to this difficult issue. But we are certain that people on both sides of the abortion debate need to listen and learn from those of us who have actually been there and struggled with these issues. Otherwise, those who do become pregnant through sexual assault will continue to be overlooked and will fail to receive the support they need.

Please listen to us and give us the opportunity to speak about this important issue.

The Ad Hoc Committee of Women Pregnant By Sexual Assault

The Extent of Misunderstanding

Typically, this issue is discussed by people on both sides of the abortion debate without any input from women who have actually been there. But if we were to stop and listen to the women who have actually experienced pregnancies following rape, what might we learn?

First, according to the best study of the incidence rate of rape pregnancies in the United States, there are approximately 32,101 women who become pregnant following rape each year. Approximately 12,230 of these rape victims continue the pregnancy. Another 3,790 have spontaneous miscarriages.

And this is important: only half of those becoming pregnant through rape end up having an abortion.

Even more importantly, our survey of women who became through the barricades preventing us from being heard.

Women pregnancy through sexual assault should be given a leadership role in discussing this important issue. However, most of the debate surrounding this issue has taken place without input from us or other women like us.

We are especially concerned — and offended — when our circumstances are exploited to promote abortion on demand, especially when there is no platform being offered for us to voice our real needs and concerns.

Our situation is not uncommon, and our needs are worthy of public notice and discussion in terms of public policy and health care directives.

The members of WPSA do not claim to know all the answers to this difficult issue. But we are certain that people on both sides of the abortion debate need to listen and learn from those of us who have actually been there and struggled with these issues. Otherwise, those who do become pregnant through sexual assault will continue to be overlooked and will fail to receive the support they need.

Please listen to us and give us the opportunity to speak about this important issue.

The Ad Hoc Committee of Women Pregnant By Sexual Assault

The members of WPSA do not claim to know all the answers to this difficult issue. But we are certain that people on both sides of the abortion debate need to listen and learn from those of us who have actually been there and struggled with these issues. Otherwise, those who do become pregnant through sexual assault will continue to be overlooked and will fail to receive the support they need.
pregnant through sexual assault found that in many of the cases where the pregnancy is aborted, women feel pressured by their families, friends, doctors and counselors to undergo an abortion they don't really want.

Assuming these statistics have been constant over the last 40 years, there are approximately 500,000 American women who have given birth to a child conceived in rape. Together, these mothers and their children, numbering approximately one million Americans, have a very personal interest in how the rape and abortion issue is being discussed. But so far, they have had very little actual influence on the discussion.

Another 640,000 women have had abortions following a rape. They too have a strong personal connection to this issue and the discussion surrounding it. So, it shouldn't be too hard to find women who would be willing to share their stories.

In fact, many already have. Nearly 200 women contributed information about their own personal experiences to Victims and Victors, which I co-edited with Julie Makimaa and Amy Sobie. (Despite the valuable perspective of the women who shared their stories, however, and despite sending copies to major book reviewers, the book’s publication was largely ignored.) Unfortunately, the public’s ignorance about the real needs and experiences of pregnant sexual assault victims is causing real harm to women like them who have experienced pregnancies resulting from rape or incest.

Why “Pro-Choice” Presumptions Are So Hurtful

Opinion polls have shown that the vast majority of women, including those who believe abortion should be legal, believe it is a bad thing, morally wrong, or, at best, a necessary evil. Other polls have found that more than 70 percent of the public believes abortion involves the taking of a human life. Put another way, support for “choice,” whether for any pregnancy or for those accompanied by particularly difficult circumstances, does not automatically mean disregard for the fact that a life is at stake, even if it is “only” a very little human life.

Women who become pregnant through rape are probably not significantly different than the general public in their beliefs. Our research suggests that the vast majority believe they are pregnant with a human life and that abortion has negative moral aspects.

Since rape victims are already dealing with the aftermath of the rape trauma, the discovery that they are pregnant is no doubt shocking, disorienting and frightening, to say the least, and many face both internal and external struggles in the months ahead. But, as many women have reported, this does not change their underlying core beliefs about the morality of abortion or the nature of what is growing inside them. Despite the unborn child's paternity or the circumstances of the conception, most women likely believe it is a life, a developing child, a child that is also hers.

While many women reported difficulty in processing their feelings toward the unborn child, in general they did not lack empathy for the child or concern about doing the right thing. Among those who continued their pregnancies, initial negative emotions about the pregnancy tended to become more positive over time and often developed into strong maternal feelings by the time of birth.

Most pregnant sexual assault victims also clearly separated the unborn child from the rape. Many saw the birth of the child as a positive good coming out of evil, as opposed to the destruction and violence of rape. To use an analogy, while people would condemn burning down a forest through arson, the new growth that ultimately comes after the fire is not seen as a manifestation of that evil, but of something good coming out of a bad circumstance.

Women who spoke of God did not believe that He was adding another evil on top of that which had already occurred or that He was unconcerned that an evil had taken place, but rather, that He was working through the circumstances to bless the mother, the child and those whose lives they touched. As one contributor put it in describing the baby, “he was the only good thing that came out of the rape.”

Many of the approximately 12,200 women per year who give birth to children conceived in rape would likely find that simply dismissing their pregnancies, and by implication their children, as “evil” is deeply offensive.

Pressured to Abort

Furthermore, our survey of women in Victims and Victors found that many, if not most, of those who become pregnant through rape or incest feel pressured to abort by their families, friends, counselors, physicians, or even the perpetrators themselves.

Among the women whose stories and surveys we collected, 43 percent of rape victims who had abortions volunteered information indicating they had felt pressured to undergo the abortion. Following are some examples from their testimonies:

“I was 22 weeks pregnant and had decided I really wanted to keep my baby. But I felt a tremendous pressure from all sides—especially to please my parents—and I finally gave in.”
“My mom told me abortion was the only answer and I was such an emotional wreck that I just thought if that's what she thinks, she must be right. So that day she took me and paid for my abortion.”

“My parents were embarrassed about the pregnancy and insisted I have an abortion . . .”

“When I look back, she [the counselor] was more of a salesperson than a counselor. I mentioned all of my doubts about the abortion and she would try to tear them down.”

“Basically my friend took me by the hand and led me to the clinic where there was no discussion about alternatives, just an appointment made for me . . .”

In most cases, those doing the pressuring simply assumed, as most people do, that abortion is the “best” or even only solution to pregnancies resulting from rape, despite the fact that many women and girls would actually wish to choose otherwise. As one woman noted in *Victims and Victors*:

I think that rape victims with pregnancies are discriminated against because people seem to think you're nuts to have a baby by the man who raped you. We're looked upon as being liars, or stupid.

As long as this social myth is left unchallenged, it is a direct and real danger to those who become pregnant through sexual assault. This myth is the driving force behind the well-intentioned advice, and even pressure, on women and girls to submit to the abortion as “the only sensible thing to do,” even when they are not so convinced.

Further, women and girls face this pressure at a time when they are likely traumatized or in crisis as a result of rape, and have few emotional resources to fall back on. Research has shown that a history of sexual assault or abuse is among the preexisting factors that increase a woman’s likelihood of experiencing emotional trauma after abortion. On the other hand, there are to my knowledge no published studies showing any measurable benefits associated with having an abortion.

In our own sample of rape victims who had abortions, almost all the women expressed regret that the abortion had occurred or believed that abortion had been the wrong solution for them. Moreover, 94 percent of those who responded rejected the idea of abortion as a good option for other women in their circumstances. They were not advocates for encouraging more of the same.

Whether our sample was random enough to represent the entire population of women who have experienced a pregnancy resulting from sexual assault is beyond our current ability to determine. But it is certainly substantive enough to conclude that at least some, and perhaps the majority, of women who have abortions after rape believe they were badly counseled to have an abortion.

**How and Why the Mourdock Story is so Distorted**

Here is how Mourdock actually explained why he did not support abortion in cases of rape:

I struggled with it myself for a long time, but I came to realize life is that gift from God. I think that even when life begins in that horrible situation of rape, it is something that God intended to happen.

For most reasonable people, it is obvious that the antecedent for “it” was “life,” not rape, as Mourdock himself later clarified, saying, “God creates life, and that was my point. God does not want rape, and by no means was I suggesting that He does. Rape is a horrible thing, and for anyone to twist my words otherwise is absurd and sick.”

In video from the debate, you will further see that Mourdock’s intonations and body language underscore (a) his concern and empathy for women who experience the horror of rape and (b) his religious conviction that every human life is a sacred gift made in the image of God.

Both are viewpoints that were expressed by women in *Victims and Victors*. For example, one contributor wrote about her daughter’s birth:

At seven pounds, four ounces, with blue eyes and dark hair, Jennifer was perfect in my eyes—so tiny, so vulnerable. As she was placed in my arms and I kissed her cheek, I knew in my heart of hearts that she belonged to God. I knew she was a sacred gift. ...

She has touched many lives in untold ways in her 24 years, and we are certain that God has a divine plan and purpose for every human being he creates. ...

During my pregnancy I was completely stripped and void of every single resource. There was not one person to cling to or depend on. ... Yet I had one magnificent secret gift, a hidden treasure that only God knew. A gift of immense value that went beyond any measure or comprehension. That gift was the flourishing life of my unborn baby.

In accepting the wonderment of this little one, I was brought to the light of a hope that I never knew before her existence.

Any fair interpretation of Mourdock’s statement regarding God’s intent is clearly not that God intends rape, but that every life, even one conceived in rape, is sacred because God intends all
children to be a gift from Him. Indeed, in biblical terms, they are children of God, made in the image of God.

But fairness was the last thing on the minds of the critics who saw in Mourdock’s statement a chance to twist his meaning in order to create a trap for abortion opponents. This twisting is seen in the question MSNBC correspondent Chuck Todd put to a Romney campaign official about Mourdock’s comments, and which was even more pointed: “Does the Romney campaign believe God intends rape?”

This is a variation of what is called a loaded question, rather like the question, “Yes or no: have you stopped beating your wife?” Todd’s question creates the presumption that Mourdock’s comments prove that at least some of Romney's supporters believe that “God intends rape.” Given that premise, Todd simply wants to know if Romney himself actually agrees with the crazies who want women to happily accept the babies that God “intends” to force on them through acts of rape?

As seen in a New York Times editorial, the Mourdock story, as slanted by the media, is seen as an opportunity to expose the logical inconsistency of social conservatives. Their objective is to simply force conservatives to admit that that God does not intend rape or the resulting rape pregnancies. From there it logically follows that if these pregnancies are not intended by God, how can anyone oppose aborting pregnancies that God never intended? And since every woman is entitled to discern God’s intent in her own life, doesn’t that mean that abortion should be allowed anytime a woman believes that having a child is not God’s intent?

Thus, the whole purpose of asking pro-life politicians about abortion in cases of rape or incest is to prove that they are either heartless or inconsistent. It appears to be a perfect Catch-22.

Why Women Pregnant By Sexual Assault Must be Silenced

The really “clever” part is that the reporters always avoid posing these questions to women who have actually experienced a pregnancy resulting from rape.

But if reporters spoke to the women who have been there, such as the women who contributed to Victims and Victors, they would likely receive a different answer. None of the women who contributed to the book expressed the view that God intended them to be raped. But many expressed the view that their children were gifts from God or that they were glad to have the child in their life. For example, Kathleen DeZeeuw wrote:

My son is truly an example of God’s great love and grace.

He is not a “misfit” nor has he, in any way, gone the way of his biological father. His life, as everyone’s, is truly unique and special. I’m so very blessed by and proud of my son.

For a reporter or anyone else to twist DeZeeuw’s or other women’s words to press toward the “logical conclusion” that since they are glad to have their children in their lives, they must therefore be glad that they were raped, is outrageous.

Indeed, most reasonable viewers would also instantly recognize such a line of questioning as the calculated, insensitive baiting that it truly is. That is exactly why no reporter wants to pose such questions to any of the 500,000 women who have actually given birth to a child conceived from sexual assault. So why is this line of questioning okay when the question is posed to a politician?

The bottom line is that WPSA members simply have no patience for sophomoric syllogisms of the type, “if rape is bad, then children conceived during rape are bad.” Or conversely, if the children conceived in rape are a blessing, then rape is a blessing. Such despicable attempts to twist the truth are deeply offensive.

But the truth that over half of women who become pregnant by rape do not have abortions, and that many or most of those who do have abortions are further traumatized, just isn’t something that the mainstream media wants to explore. Doing so might put an end to all the entertaining "gotcha" moments that occur when ill-prepared pro-life politicians can be portrayed as heartless, inconsistent, or both.

How Pro-Lifers Can Avoid Contributing to the Problem

Unfortunately, during the last eight years there has been little support for the WPSA petition for congressional hearings from most pro-life politicians or major pro-life organizations.

In some cases, I’ve been told by some pro-life leaders that they believe “we can never win the rape and incest issue.” Given the overwhelming public support for abortion in cases of rape, these leaders see it as a lost cause. Some have argued that rape pregnancies represent only 2 percent of all abortions and so it is better to budget their political capital on arguing about the 99 percent of abortions that are not due to rape and for which there is less public support.

In my view, this thinking is entirely upside down and inside out. WPSA members, and many other women like them, will step forward if given an opportunity to tell the truth about their real experiences and needs. Many have already done so in Victims and Victors.
Unless they listen to women who have been there, many pro-life politicians will continue to misspeak and mishandle the issue and see their words twisted. Not only do they need to listen to women who have been there, they need to continuously redirect reporters to ask WPSA women themselves.

The question, “Do you support abortion in cases of rape or incest?” needs to be countered with, “Does abortion make the lives of women who become pregnant following sexual assault better, or does it just add to their trauma and troubles?”

And the way to answer that question is to support efforts to give WPSA members, and other women like them, an opportunity to focus the attention of policy makers, the media, and the public on what their real experiences, needs and insights are.

* * *

See the article at right for information on how to join, support and spread the word about WPSA, and how to lobby legislators and lobbyists in your state.

---

**About Victims and Victors**

*Victims and Victors: Speaking About Their Pregnancies, Abortions and Children Resulting From Sexual Assault* addresses the complex issues surrounding sexual assault pregnancy and abortion in a clear and insightful manner. Drawn from a survey of nearly 200 women who experienced rape or incest pregnancies, this book reveals that most women who become pregnant through sexual assault do not want abortions.

*Victims and Victors* gives voice to women who have experienced a pregnancy resulting from rape or incest, shows why abortion is not a compassionate solution, and lays out a clear response to the premise that abortion is helpful—or even necessary—for women facing a sexual assault pregnancy.

Available for $11.95 plus shipping. To order, visit www.afterabortion.org or call 1-888-412-2676.

---

**A Call to Action**

We need a broad grassroots effort to build a platform by which women who experienced a pregnant resulting from sexual assault will finally be heard. So far, the WPSA petition has been largely ignored by politicians, the media, and leaders on both sides of the abortion debate.

Please call your state and federal legislators and ask them to take a public position in favor of having the hearings requested by WPSA.

Please call any of the pro-life groups you support, especially any with lobbyists in Washington D.C., and ask them to support hearings.

Perhaps these controversies will point to the need to learn how to better address this issue, and we can finally get support for the WPSA petition from leading pro-life and pro-family groups.

**How to Help**

To be a part of this effort, read the petition online at www.afterabortion.org/rapepregnancypetition. You’ll find a web form to fill out in order to become a WPSA Supporter. You can also support WPSA on by “liking” the Facebook page at www.facebook.com/supportwpsa.

If you are a woman who has experienced a pregnancy resulting from rape or incest, you can join WPSA and add your name to the petition (you need not go public to join WPSA). You will find a link at www.afterabortion.org/rapepregnancypetition. You can also join by email at elliotinstitute@gmail.com.

Finally, please share this information and the petition with your legislators and with pro-life leaders and lobbyists. And share it with fellow pro-lifers, family members and friends and ask them to support WPSA too.

---

**Special Contributions**

In memory of
Claire Johnson
Lillian Kober

Gifts can be made to the Elliot Institute to honor or remember loved ones, and will be acknowledged in this newsletter unless otherwise requested.

---

**Keep Up to Date!**

Get the latest news, articles and resources through our free email list or on Facebook and Twitter.

Email list: www.afterabortion.org/joinlist.htm.
Facebook: www.facebook.com/elliotinstitute
Twitter: www.twitter.com/elliotinstitute
My Rape Pregnancy, from page 12

despite moral qualms and heightened sensitivity to victimization, to swallow their reservations and have the abortion if only to silence the rising doubts about their rape story.

I hope I’ve convinced you that the rape and abortion issue is not as simple as you’ve always assumed.

This is why I have joined the Ad Hoc Committee of Women Pregnant by Sexual Assault (WPSA). For eight years, we have been petitioning Congress to hold hearings to allow us to describe our own experiences, insights, and needs.

It is our hope that if policy makers, the media, and well intentioned people on all sides of the abortion debate finally hear the truth from those who have been there. Only when our voices and experiences are included in future discussions and arguments over rape, incest, and abortion will those discussions and arguments be less blatantly ignorant and hurtful.

Whatever side of the abortion debate you are on, I hope you’ll agree that our voices should be heard. Please call your representative and senators and ask them to endorse our petition.

It’s time to replace posturing with knowledge. And in this case, knowledge can come only from those who have actually been there.

* * *

Deana Schroeder is a member of the Ad Hoc Committee of Women Pregnant By Sexual Assault (WPSA). This article is reprinted with her permission.

Rape Hurt My Mom, But Abortion Devastated Her

My mother was raped at age 16. Her parents forced her to have an abortion. She stopped going to church, dropped out of high school and became depressed. Her young adulthood was during WWII and she had a problem with relationships. She eventually married my father after only a two week courtship and she told him what a horrible woman she was because of the abortion.

They vowed to have as many children as possible. God sent them ten children and she lost one to miscarriage; she mourned the lost baby along with her aborted child. When she was pregnant with me, her third child in four years, the doctor told her she wasn’t really pregnant and that he would remove some tissue. She knew what he meant and got another doctor.

I told my dad how blessed I was that mom knew what he meant and he then told me, 60 years later, that the reason she knew was because of the rape and subsequent abortion. She took this secret to her grave and I would have never known except my dad was praising me for getting involved in the pro-life movement through 40 Days for Life.

I was almost not here along with my four children and six grandchildren. My dad told me she mourned that aborted child her whole life and she never forgot and never received healing. My mother died at age 67 and I was told her secret when I was 60.

Rape hurt my mother, but abortion devastated her.

—a comment posted to our web site

Please Support Our Work

Our research, education, and advocacy efforts are funded solely by the support of people like you. We have a small mailing list, so your donation makes a big difference. Thank you! Also, please check your mailing label to see if there is a “time to renew” notice.

To subscribe or renew, simply return the form below or call 1-888-412-2676. Or donate online at www.afterabortion.org/donate.

// Please keep sending me The Post-Abortion Review. I want to support your research and education efforts. Enclosed is my donation of: // / / $500 / / $100 / / $75 / / $50 / / $20 / / Other $_________.

Our Sustaining Partners are a group of donors who support the work of the Elliot Institute through regular donations. You decide how much you want to give and when—and you’ll receive monthly updates on our work. Plus, you’re free to cut back or cancel your donations at any time.

// Please send me information about how I can become a Sustaining Partner by making a pledge for regular donations.

Name: ________________________________________________________________

Address: __________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________

Mail to:

The Post-Abortion Review
P.O. Box 7348
Springfield, IL 62791
I’ve been there. Not Todd Akin. Not Richard Mourdock. And certainly not their critics who sanctimoniously imagine that they know what pregnant sexual assault victims really want and need.

As my story shows, all too often, our self-appointed champions do more harm than good.

I was 17, drugged and raped. When I learned I was pregnant, my family, counselors, and doctors took control.

They intended the best. They wanted to help me. And even though there are literally no studies showing any benefit from abortion, they had total confidence in the social myth that abortion is the best option, even the only option, in cases of sexual assault.

Even many pro-lifers approve of abortions in cases of rape. So surely it must be the best choice, right?

Not in my case. It just added more layers of trauma, self-doubt, grief and guilt. The negative impact lasted for years.

I’m not alone.

A national study published in 1996 found that half of the estimated 32,000 rape pregnancies which occur each year end in abortion. Note: half. Not even 60 percent.

That so many women choose to give birth after rape, despite the social expectations and pressure to abort, should give you pause. Why aren’t all rape victims embracing the conventional wisdom that abortion is the best treatment for rape pregnancies?

A hint is found in another study of 164 women who had rape pregnancies (conducted for the book Victims and Victors). In that study, the majority of those who had abortions said it only caused additional problems and the vast majority regretted having abortions. By contrast, among those who delivered the child, satisfaction was higher and none stated any regret for giving birth.

Why are these facts so little known? It is because many people on both sides of the abortion debate are more concerned with their ideologies than they are the complex nitty-gritty details which confound sound bites.

Because the actual experiences of pregnant sexual assault victims have not been widely heard, the social myth that abortion is the best, or even the only, option in cases of rape pregnancies is almost universally accepted. This universal myth creates its own set of problems for women.

When a pregnant sexual assault victim balks at having an abortion, she will almost immediately faces queries of suspicion from family and friends. How can any woman have a rapist’s child, they wonder? And then the suspicion mounts . . . maybe she lied. Maybe she was not really the victim of a “legitimate” rape?

And so the assumption that surely a real rape victim would want an abortion creates a new pressure on hurting women, in a time of intense crisis, to accept the recommendation of abortion,