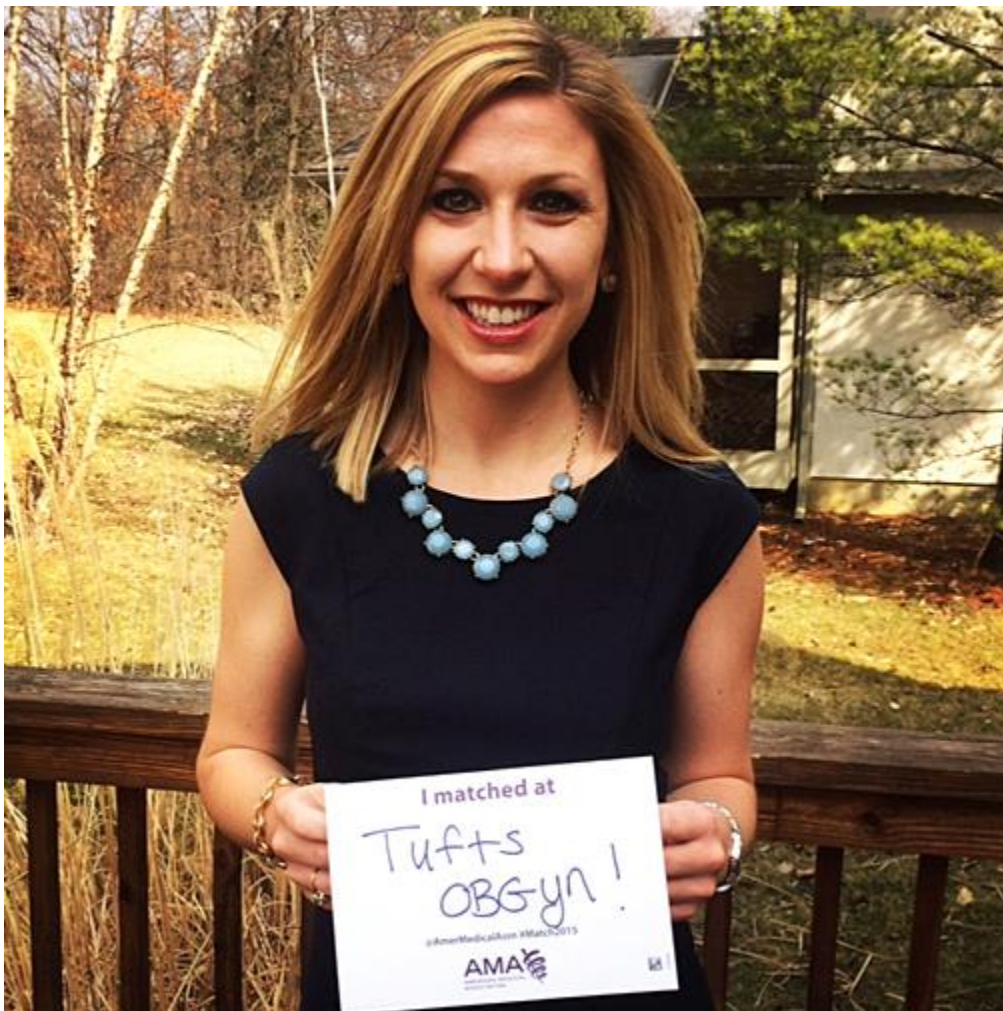


Medical student wins national award

By Samantha Watson : April 29th, 2015



In the face of an often stigmatized procedure, one medical student is fighting to make sure all women have access to the health care they need by becoming an abortion provider.



Fourth-year medical student Carolyn Payne will continue her training with an obstetrics and gynecology residency at Tufts Medical Center in Boston.

That's why Carolyn Payne, a fourth-year medical student at The University of Toledo, is this year's recipient of the National Abortion Federation's Elizabeth Karlin Early Achievement Award.

"It's an issue that I've studied for a long time and, early in my career, I recognized there was a huge unmet need for abortion providers," Payne said.

She began her journey as an undergraduate at the University of Michigan, where she took women's studies courses to feed her own curiosity. Because abortion rights were a common topic brought up in class, she decided to investigate the matter further.

Payne began working at a Planned Parenthood that provided abortions, sitting in on counseling sessions with women. Her time there gave her perspective on what women facing this decision are going through and the many factors involved in it, and fueled her desire to learn more.

She then spent a summer working in a hospital in Ghana, a country where abortion is legal but culturally unacceptable. While there, Payne saw women die from trying to self-induce abortions to avoid the cultural ridicule of being seen obtaining an abortion at a public hospital.

"Abortion is a procedure that we can do in five minutes with simple technologies," Payne said. "It is incredibly safe when done with the right equipment by skilled providers, and yet around the world we are still allowing women to die by denying them access to safe pregnancy termination."

Payne worries that because abortion has been legal in America since 1973 and women in this country for the most part no longer die from unsafe abortion, many of her peers don't understand the reality of the morbidity and mortality associated with unsafe and inaccessible abortion.

"Throughout history and in nearly every culture, women have always terminated pregnancies," Payne said. "We as a society and as a medical profession have the opportunity to acknowledge that and provide this care safely to women. Alternatively, we can ignore reality and turn our back on women when they need empathetic medical care the most. If I can provide this service and save a woman's life, that's a great privilege."

According to Payne, another problem with denying women the right to an abortion is that it's not always as simple as a woman not wanting a baby.

"I'm on an obstetrics rotation right now, and we frequently see women present to the hospital with pregnancies that are not viable or are severely compromising the health of the woman," Payne said. "She may need a termination, but if the fetus still has a heartbeat, the entire obstetrics team is uncomfortable providing that woman with the evidence-based medical care she needs and deserves."

Payne, who will graduate from the UT College of Medicine in May, matched into an obstetrics and gynecology residency at Tufts Medical Center, which is a Kenneth J. Ryan residency

training program in abortion and family planning in Boston. Having this distinction means the program will allow Payne to practice abortion procedures — something not all programs support.

“I am so thrilled about this match and think I will thrive in Boston,” Payne said. “I am confident Tufts is going to train me to be an excellent ob-gyn and will nurture and support my involvement with organized medical and political advocacy.”

Payne isn't the only one confident about her future. Dr. Lisa Harris, one of Payne's mentors, nominated her for the National Abortion Federation's Elizabeth Karlin Early Achievement Award.

“I have no doubt that in watching Carolyn over these past years I am witnessing the beginning of an exceptional career in medicine and an exceptional career in leadership and advocacy around abortion care and rights,” Harris wrote in her nomination.

Payne plans to continue advocating for women's health care for the rest of her career.

“There are a lot of negative stereotypes about abortion providers,” Payne said. “Something that I hope to do is show that abortion providers are compassionate, educated doctors who just want to provide the best health care to women.”

Original article found online at: http://utnews.utoledo.edu/index.php/04_29_2015/medical-student-wins-national-award