

The dangers of parental consent start before obstetric care

TO THE EDITORS: The “Call to Action” issued by Dr Bortoletto and colleagues focuses attention on a key population.¹ As with many transitions, that between adolescence and adulthood exposes adolescents to the risk of being subject to the rules of both and the privileges of neither. It is essential to ensure that adolescents are empowered to receive the quality prenatal and obstetric options and care that all women deserve. However, it is critical to note that our failure to ensure that adolescents receive comprehensive reproductive health care predates their first prenatal visit. Currently, 21 states have laws requiring parental consent, 11 have laws mandating prior parental notification, and 5 have both. Six states have laws that have been temporarily or permanently enjoined.² Given that 75% of pregnancies among adolescents are unintended, the right to choose how to manage a pregnancy must be part of a conversation about adolescent reproductive care.³

Dr Espey and colleagues elegantly outline the importance of full reproductive autonomy for all women, and particularly for adolescents, in their articles in this journal, with the support of our subspecialty societies and the Society for Adolescent Health and Medicine.⁴ In this spirit, I echo Dr Bortoletto’s call and urge us to consider not just obstetric care or gynecologic care, but women’s care. ■

Anuja Singh, MD
Division of Family Planning
Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology
University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill
Chapel Hill, NC
anuja_singh@med.unc.edu

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