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### Opinion

## Undercover videos mislead, distort Planned Parenthood's work



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Donna Grethen / Op Art (Donna Grethen)



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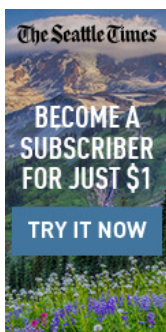
## Providing fetal tissue for research is valid and contributes to the advancement of science and to improvement of medical care.

By [Suzanne Poppema](#)

*Special to The Times*

AS a physician who has provided abortion care since 1974, I believe it is important to address the current attack on Planned Parenthood that targets doctors and women who participate in the donation of fetal tissue for lifesaving research.

The levels of deceit that opponents of safe and legal abortion have used recently is distressing and shocking. In the last two weeks, extremists released secretly recorded videos that have been edited in misleading ways to falsely portray Planned Parenthood's participation in tissue donation and research.



The videos make it appear that compassionate doctors are violating the law. In actuality, providers in these videos spoke at length following strict ethical guidelines and about not making a profit from any donations. In fact, it appears the only lawbreakers are the group who orchestrated elaborate lies in an attempt to discredit doctors who care about the health and well-being of women.

While the issue of fetal-tissue donation for medical research may be new for many, the community of abortion providers like myself, Planned Parenthood and those who belong to the National Abortion Federation, have always maintained that the decision to participate in human-fetal-tissue research is valid and valuable. It contributes to the advancement of science and to the improvement of medical care. We all agree that it must be done strictly on a donation basis with the full consent of the patient.

To be clear, Planned Parenthood of the Great Northwest and the Hawaiian Islands does not donate tissue for scientific research. However, the organization stands behind Planned Parenthood affiliates around the country that do. And just like every other high-quality health-care provider, Planned Parenthood donates tissue for research only with full, appropriate consent from patients and under the highest ethical and legal standards.

I am now retired from abortion care, but when I was practicing, we allowed women the option to donate their tissue after an abortion, and many women chose this option. The women who chose to donate their tissue universally expressed the feeling that this was an even greater good that could come of decisions to terminate pregnancies — those decisions were deeply thought-out and absolutely right for them, but nonetheless were often intensely complex decisions.

When donated tissue was received, we would alert the lab to pick up the specimens — no money was ever involved. No one profits and the basic costs are covered by clinics that support research into diseases, such as Parkinson's, Alzheimer's, muscular dystrophy, spinal-cord injuries and many others. Advancing research and ultimately curing these disorders is a public good that we can all agree upon.

### **“To imply that women would seek abortion care simply to provide fetal tissue for research is beyond the pale.”**

We know that these highly edited video interviews, obtained without knowledge or consent of the interviewees, should not be trusted. The intricate planning of deception, including forming a sham corporation to allegedly collect and distribute human tissue to research labs, is stunningly blatant in its unprofessionalism.

To imply that women would seek abortion care simply to provide fetal tissue for research is beyond the pale. Such horrible disrespect for women is breathtaking. Why would anyone take away a source of comfort and validation for women who donate tissue so their unintended pregnancies can contribute to the greater human good? Why would anyone stand in the way of valuable research that can cure disease and save lives?

And what good can come of attempting to discredit Planned Parenthood, an organization that for nearly 100 years has been the most trusted women's health-care provider in the country. These groups and their infiltrations seek only to make abortion more and more difficult to legally obtain. If they can't make it outright illegal for women to decide what is best for themselves and their families, they will ensure that both women and abortion providers live in fear. That is the real agenda.



Dr. Suzanne T. Poppema is a past board chair with Physicians for Reproductive Health and is director of International Medical Consulting in Seattle.

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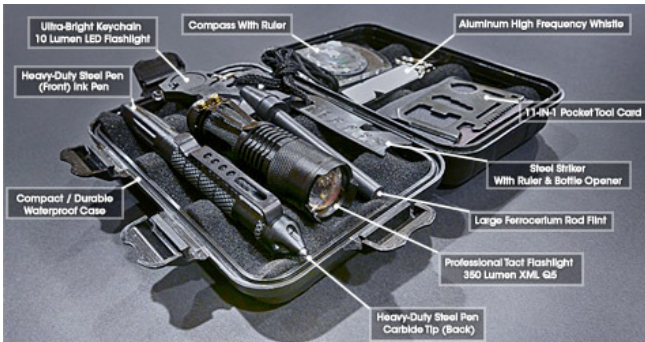


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