



UPDATE | January 23, 2018

Meet Our Advocates: Dr. Erica Hinz



Where are you from?

Danbury, CT

What's your specialty or area of expertise?

Obstetrics and Gynecology, Family Planning

What first inspired you to become a doctor?

My path to become a doctor, and specifically an abortion provider, has taken many twists and turns. As a young girl, I gravitated towards math and science, and also found human anatomy and biology fascinating. I took a lot of “nerd” math and science classes and distinctly remember looking around and being one of the few girls in these classes, and I always felt a little out place. But thankfully, my parents saw how excited I was about these topics and always encouraged me to follow my dreams. In fact, one of my favorite Christmas gifts of all time (a human anatomy model), had a little note from Santa saying “Girls can be scientists, too.” I was inspired and kept on doing what made me happy despite that constant sense that I didn’t belong. I initially decided to pursue

medicine. All the while, my passion for women's rights and the notion that women were just as smart and capable as their male counterparts continued to grow. Ultimately, I found that obstetrics and gynecology and reproductive health were the perfect coalescence of everything I loved: math, science, medicine, advocacy, and feminism. My experiences as a medical student, resident, family planning fellow, and now attending have humbled and inspired me, and even if it took me a while to get here, I am blessed to get to do what I do.

What story about one of your patients most sticks with you?

"Mary" presented at 22 weeks for a termination of pregnancy. The pregnancy was a result of rape. She didn't tell anyone in her family what had happened. Her emotions surrounding the pregnancy were extremely complex, as she desperately wanted to have a child, but she felt guilt, shame, and isolation after the assault. She had initially decided that she would continue the pregnancy, and that this would help her grieve and try to grasp on to something positive after such an unimaginable and traumatic experience. She then went for her anatomy scan at 20 weeks and was devastated to learn that the fetus had multiple lethal anomalies. After coming to a conclusion that continuing the pregnancy was the best thing for her to move past the attack, she had to face yet another agonizing decision. Ultimately, she decided to end the pregnancy, and she came to me at 22 weeks.

I live in a state where, thankfully, I was able to help her through the most difficult time in her life. I reflect back on this patient often, and think of how many other "Marys" have a similar story but aren't able to access this care because of lack of providers, unnecessary and cruel 20-week bans, or sky-high costs. How many Marys out there have been forced to carry a pregnancy to term or to deliver a baby that had such severe anomalies that it would likely not survive labor, or at best, would live a few minutes after delivery? Every woman seeking a

no matter under what circumstance, deserves to be treated with kindness and respect.

What current policy issue especially motivates you to be an advocate?

I think of Mary often, and how unfair our system is that access to this care depends on your zip code or income. I am especially motivated to advocate for repealing the Hyde Amendment. I think it is also important to celebrate the positive and proactive legislation that is happening across many different states (especially at a time when so many vulnerable populations are under constant attack). As of January 2018, Governor Rauner of Illinois (a Republican nonetheless!) signed HB40, legislation that provides state health insurance and Medicaid coverage for abortions. I have already started to see how this piece of legislation directly improves the lives of so many women and our patients, and only hope more states will follow!

Who is your social justice hero?

This is a really difficult question. One of our residents recently opened my eyes to an incredible social justice advocate, Erica Garner. Erica, who recently passed away, became a prominent advocate for social justice and racial equality after losing her father to police brutality. Her ability to fight and bring light to the injustices facing the Black community while grieving is truly inspirational.

Erica went into cardiac arrest following an asthma attack three months after her pregnancy and she is one of the alarming number of women who are dying during or within one year of giving birth. This crisis disproportionately affects Black women—they are three to four times more likely to die from pregnancy-related causes than their White counterparts. We all have to come together to overcome to acknowledge and

Every week, our Meet Our Advocates series showcases the talents and passion of one of our doctors and finds out, in their own words, what inspires them to be physician-advocates. Erica Hinz, MD, MPH is a member of the Leadership Training Academy Class of 2018.

[Read more interviews from the Meet Our Advocates series.](#)

SHARE



PROGRAM CONTACT

Jen Girdish

✉ jen@prh.org

☎ (646) 649-9927