

Fri, May 03, 2019

SIGN IN

SUBSCRIBE

U.S. | World | Business | Tech & Science | Culture | Sports | Health | Opinion | Ndelible

HEALTH

MY LIFE AS AN ABORTION PROVIDER: 'IT'S ACTUALLY ONE OF THE SAFEST MEDICAL PROCEDURES THAT WE CAN PERFORM'

BY KASHMIRA GANDER ON 4/20/19 AT 6:40 AM EDT



SHARE



HEALTH

As state legislatures across the U.S. debate bills restricting access to abortions, people like Dr. Meera Shah are on the ground providing reproductive health care which she describes as a “basic human right.”

So what is it like to be an abortion provider at a time when, according to research by the National Abortion Federation published last year, anti-abortion campaigners have been emboldened by the current political climate to ramp up attacks against providers?

LATEST SLIDESHOWS



In Photos: The Kentucky Derby Through The Years



In Photos: Japan's Emperor Naruhito Ascends the Throne



Helmut Newton: The Titan of Titillation

In 2017, a bombing of a clinic was attempted for the first time in years; threats of death and harm doubled; trespassing tripled, and incidents of obstruction climbed from 580 in 2016 to 1,700.

Shah, who is also a Fellow with Physicians for Reproductive Health, is resolute she wouldn't be in any other field, and while she respects protesters outside her clinic are entitled to exercise their first amendment rights, she says doesn't engage with them. "[I'm] just trying to do my job," the family medicine physician and advocate for women's medical rights based in New York tells *Newsweek*. "I honestly can't see myself doing any other type of work," she says, adding: "I am proud to be an abortion provider and advocate for this important service because abortion care is health care period."

She first became interested in abortion care when she started residency as a doctor, enabling her to work more closely with patients.

As well as tending to patients, Shah also finds herself spending time debunking myths surrounding the procedure, from the incorrect notions it causes breast cancer to fears of infertility. And as one if four American women have an abortion in their lifetime, her patients don't come from one demographic, but rather "represent the broad spectrum of humanity."

Attempting to demystify the procedure, Shah explains abortions in early pregnancy involve taking pills, while later terminations see medics opening the cervix and emptying the uterus. Both approaches take just a few minutes, rarely cause complications, and are "completely safe," she says.

"There's a lot of inflammatory language and myths being discussed in the media," argues Shah.

"The words that I hear are 'post-birth abortion' or 'late-term abortion' and there are not real medical terms, these were all just made up," she warns. This type of vocabulary is often used in debates surrounding abortion laws, which in recent months have centered around so-called heartbeat bills, relating to when a fetal heartbeat can be detected rather than its viability.

"Abortion care is incredibly safe and it's actually one of the safest medical procedures that we can perform," she says, pointing to a recent study by the National Academy of Science, Engineering and Medicine.

"The same study actually proved that the biggest threat to safe abortion is the litany of regulations that prevent access to abortion care, it raises cost of abortion care, delays procedures and actually these regulations end up being harmful to patients and their health."

Shah encountered such obstructions when she practiced in Texas, she says.

"I truly believe that reproductive health care is a basic human right. It shouldn't be considered a privilege to just some. Unfortunately in the United States, the type of



TIME 100 Gala: The 23 Fiercest Looks on the Red Carpet

 **SIGN UP FOR OUR NEWSLETTER**

SIGN UP

[Update your preferences »](#)

care that you receive, really depends on the zip code in which you live.

"For a brief period I was working in Texas and if a patient came to get an abortion, I wasn't able to provide that care that day. Instead I would have to do an ultrasound, whether or not if it's medically indicated. I had to describe the ultrasound to the patient whether they wanted to hear it or not. I had to read a statement and a script, which included some misinformation such as abortion causes breast cancer, and then I had to send them away and have them return at least 24 hours later to receive an abortion.

RELATED STORIES

Most Abortions Happen Before 13th Week of Pregnancy

"Now, none of these rules, none of these laws are founded in science are evidence based, they are all down to an ideology and do nothing to save our reproductive health, only harm patients."

What President Trump Gets Wrong About Abortion

By talking openly about her work, Shah says she hopes to normalize the procedure so it is regarded as "just another part of health care."

Anti-Abortion Bills Across America



Pregnancies can be terminated using drugs.

GETTY IMAGES

[REQUEST REPRINT](#), [SUBMIT CORRECTION](#) OR [VIEW EDITORIAL GUIDELINES](#)

Join the Discussion

MORE IN HEALTH



A Boy Heard a Buzzing Sound in His Ear. It Was a Tick on His Eardrum.



Scientists Make 3D-Printed Organ Breakthrough With Yellow Food Dye

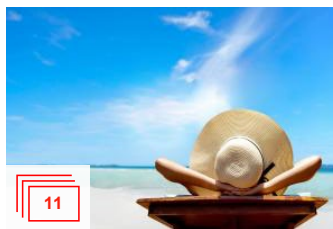


Check How Machiavellian You Are on His 550th birthday



Melania Trump Praised for 'Freedom of Religion' Remark on Day of Prayer

RECOMMENDED SLIDESHOWS



11

10 Ways To Make Your Next Vacation Stress-Free



16

15 Ways to Make Home Cooking Easier Than Ever

LATEST NEWS

FCBD 2019 Store Locator

8 Great (Not Totally Obvious) Things to Do in Midtown

How to Get Tickets to BTS' Performance For 'GMA's' Summer Concert Series

'Fortnite' Season 8 Overtime Challenges Live

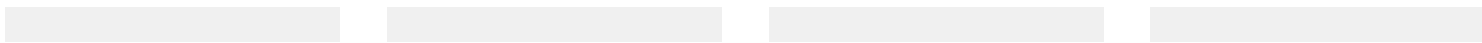
The Perfect Kentucky Derby Drinks

Larry Nassar Judge Speaks on Important Victim Statements at Sentencing Case

Ted Bundy Quotes about Guilt, Society

Man Who Fell Into Hawaii Volcano and Survived Was U.S. Soldier

EDITOR'S PICK





U.S.

Ivanka Trump, Jared Kushner Security Clearance Questions 'Shut Down'

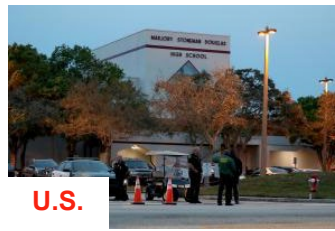
The White House counsel said, "You can't answer that," relayed Democratic Representative Elijah Cummings.



U.S.

How Did 'Jeopardy!' Champion James Holzhauer Get So Smart?

Jeopardy! champion James Holzhauer update, results. How much has he won so far?



U.S.

Florida Teachers Split on Bill to Let Them Carry Guns on Campus

"If I have an aggressive kid in my class and he gets a hold of my gun, what then?" asked one teacher.



U.S.

Supermajority Sees Nearly 50,000 Women Join From All 50 States

Supermajority aims to mobilize at least 2 million women over the next year to become political leaders in their communities and influence U.S. elections, including the upcoming 2020 race.

© 2019 NEWSWEEK



About Us | Corrections | Contact Us | Editorial Guidelines | Advertise | Copyright | Terms & Conditions | Privacy Policy | Cookie Policy | Terms of Sale | Archive | Announcements | Consent preferences

Editions: U.S. Edition | Middle East | 日本 | 한국 | Pakistan | Polska | România