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Blog



Meet A Clinician Champion: Dr. Julie Johnston

January 22, 2014 | [Reproductive Health Access Project](#)



As the national organizer for RHAP, I have the privilege of working with some of the most amazing activist physicians in the country. I am constantly reminded of the commitment and perseverance it takes to provide abortion care in so many places. A sterling example of this persistent dedication is Dr. Julie Johnston.

I first met Julie in 2005, when she was a resident. Julie entered residency determined to be able to provide abortion care. As she moved into her 3rd year and attempted to use the elective time she had banked, the administration found out that the

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residency was no longer carrying an abortion training malpractice policy. To support her training, the faculty banded together at the last minute and purchased a malpractice policy for her.

This allowed Julie to train in Maine to gain the skills that she wanted. During her third year of residency, Julie incorporated manual uterine aspiration for miscarriage management as her quality improvement project.

After residency, Julie joined the faculty at her residency with the intent of expanding the reproductive health training options for residents in her program. Quite soon after joining as faculty the policies changed and residents were forbidden to train in abortion care even on their own vacation time.

Julie did not give up. She enlisted support from the Reproductive Health Access Project, the ACLU reproductive freedom team, a lawyer in the Massachusetts attorney general's office, and the Center for Reproductive Rights to push back against these restrictions. During this time she provided didactic abortion training for residents in the evening. Over time she created structured training on contraceptive management, options counseling, values clarification, and miscarriage management for everyone in her program. Eighteen months later the policies were changed to allow residents to obtain abortion training on their personal time.

During her time working in her community Julie has witnessed that many women seeking abortion care struggled with transportation and insurance issues. In 2012, Julie and several other interested physicians began exploring options for setting up an independent practice to meet those needs. Julie is currently working out the logistics to provide comprehensive reproductive health care in a separate practice.

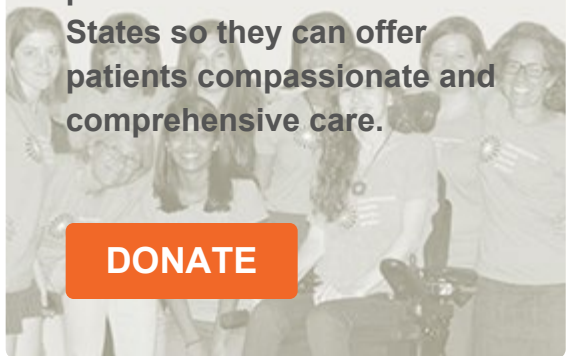
While being a tireless advocate for integrating abortion training, Julie also managed to find the time to start a family, and has two beautiful boys. Whenever I feel worn down or discouraged about the

attacks on abortion access, I think of Julie. Her quiet determination, great political skills and her unwavering commitment to women's reproductive health are a constant source of inspiration. Thank you, Julie, for modeling what an activist physician can do!

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