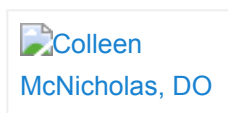


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We Are Women's Partners in Health

Guest Blog: 40 Years After Roe v. Wade— Politics or Patients, Who Is Winning?

Posted on [January 24, 2013](#)

— Colleen
McNicholas,
DO

This week marks the 40th anniversary of the Roe v. Wade decision—the US Supreme Court ruling that protects a woman's right to have an abortion. In the years since, state legislatures have been primarily responsible for the laws that have at times validated and secured this right, and at other times severely limited it. However, in recent years, there has been a troubling trend. We have seen an unprecedented number of legislative attempts by politicians and government officials to interfere with women's reproductive rights and with medical practice.

According to the Guttmacher Institute, 17 states now mandate that women undergoing abortion be given factually inaccurate information such as links between abortion and breast cancer and abortion and mental health. Eleven states have seen bills that attempt to limit medication-induced abortion, including some that specify the dose and route of such services. These laws completely disregard the meticulous and thorough process of scientific investigation that has been the cornerstone of medical advancement.

At least two states have proposed or enacted legislation that allows physicians to withhold information from a woman about her pregnancy if they feel the information would result in her

choosing to terminate, essentially permitting [reproductive coercion](#) by the physician, which I believe is a universally deplorable form of violence against women. At least 18 states have introduced some version of legislation that not only requires an ultrasound for women seeking abortion but often dictates who can perform it, how and when it is performed, and what the provider must say to the woman undergoing it.

No matter where you stand on the abortion debate, this invasion of politics into medical practice should concern you. This scripting of patient-doctor interaction is unacceptable. The commitment we made when choosing to become women's health care physicians was to promote the health of women through the execution of the best science. Our education and training tell us that these laws have not been created in the spirit of promoting the health of our patients.

As we reflect on this anniversary, consider the burden these laws pose for the girls, women, and families we care for. I hope that the 41st anniversary will be marked with something to celebrate: widespread comprehensive sexual education, improved access to the most effective contraceptive methods, and, ultimately, a reduction in unplanned pregnancies.

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Anonymous
on [January 24, 2013 at 3:02 pm](#) said:

Brilliantly said!

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