

FEATURED ARTICLES

Commentary: Hoag abortion ban is a step backward
May 10, 2013

Mailbag: As doctors, we oppose abortion ban

June 11, 2013

Re. "Commentary: Hoag is committed to women's health," (May 24):

As obstetricians/gynecologists who admit patients to Hoag Hospital, we are compelled to respond to the commentary by Robert Braithwaite, Hoag CEO, and Gary McKitterick, chairman of the Hoag Board of Directors.

Their article discussed women's health care and the affiliation between Hoag Hospital and St. Joseph Health. St. Joseph Health is a Catholic health system that bans many women's health-care services, including contraception, sterilization, most infertility treatments and abortion.

As soon as we became aware of the possible affiliation between Hoag and St. Joseph Health last fall, we questioned Hoag administration about the potential impact on women's health-care services and abortion in particular. We were repeatedly assured that there would be no change in these services at Hoag. We were, therefore, shocked and dismayed to learn that Hoag was banning abortions, effective May 1. Advertisement

Three points in their commentary demand our response. First, their conclusion that elective abortions at Hoag are unsafe. Most elective abortions are safely performed outside of hospitals, in outpatient facilities. If an elective abortion is done in a hospital it is because the patient has some complicating factor, such as an underlying health condition, that may require the nursing care, monitoring and equipment that is only available in a hospital. Hoag is well equipped to handle any potential difficulties or complications that might occur during and after such a procedure, since there is an obstetrician present in the hospital at all times, and specialists in complications of pregnancy as well as intensive-care units are readily available.

To claim that abortions are not safely done at Hoag because we perform fewer than 100 per year is not only incorrect (as attested to by the physicians doing them, the number is well over 100, and those of us who review obstetrical complications at Hoag know that they are exceedingly rare), it also sets an arbitrary standard which is not met by many other procedures done at Hoag, such as Gamma knife brain surgery or robotic uterine fibroid surgery. Will Hoag be discontinuing those procedures too?

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