



Planned Parenthood physician corrects the record

BY DEBORAH L. NUCATOLA, MD — 04/06/11 05:29 PM EDT
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Planned Parenthood's medical standards and guidelines are informed by the most trusted medical knowledge as well as by professional and scientific organizations such as the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the United States Preventive Services Task Force, and the American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology.

Our health center fiscal model is simple: we receive medical payments, and we solicit charitable contributions to fill the gap between these payments and the real costs of providing high-quality care. Seventy-five percent of our patients live at or below 150 percent of the federal poverty level, which means that government funding and private donations are critical to offering affordable family planning and preventive care, including cancer screening, to women. As a medical professional, I know the importance of financial stability to ensuring high-quality health care, and that is why we insist that each health center has the resources it needs to provide quality care.

Most of our patients — six out of 10 — consider a women's health center like those run by Planned Parenthood to be their main source of health care. As this country's health care crisis has deepened in recent years, we have made efforts to ensure that women in every one of our service areas have access to preventive care and pregnancy options. That means that each of our family planning health centers offers preventive care such as cancer screening and HIV testing. We also ensure that abortion services are available at at least one location within every local, regional, or state affiliate, with some exceptions for local considerations.

We are committed to eliminating barriers to reproductive health care for our patients. Over the last two decades we have expanded access to services such as emergency contraception, and used innovation such as telemedicine to reach patients in rural, isolated communities. We have also expanded our services to meet unique needs. For example, we have introduced mobile tools that help Spanish-speaking clients get access to HIV testing and screening tools to assist patients dealing with intimate partner violence.

Abortion represents three percent of our services nationally, a statistic based on Planned Parenthood's use of professional protocols for its data reporting, following government requirements for tracking and calculating services performed. Some opponents of legal abortion make unfounded statistical claims about Planned Parenthood, erroneously asserting that Planned Parenthood exaggerates its estimates of the preventive care it delivers. For example, claims that Planned Parenthood counts a 12-month supply of birth control pills as 12 visits are simply untrue.

Opponents of legal abortion use a plethora of false allegations and dubious tactics to question Planned Parenthood's policies and practices.

The fact is that our high standards rival those of any top-tier national health care organization, and patient health and safety is always our top concern. That is why one in five women trusts Planned Parenthood to provide her with care at some point in her life. It is this special relationship with so many women that has allowed Planned Parenthood to do more than any other organization in the United States to help lower the rate of unintended pregnancy and reduce the need for abortion. That is the Planned Parenthood I know.



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