

## Letters to the Editor

### Implications of United States Supreme Court's ruling on *Dobbs vs Jackson Women's Health Organization*: perspective of physicians caring for critically ill fetuses and newborns

The Fetal Heart Society is a United States-based, international, non-profit organization dedicated to the perinatal care of pregnancies affected by a fetal cardiovascular diagnosis. In the practice of fetal cardiology, diagnoses that are physically, psychologically, emotionally and/or financially debilitating to our patients and their families are encountered routinely. In the most challenging cases, the diagnosis may be lethal to the fetus, the pregnant patient or both.

Our medical practice requires us to provide accurate, evidence-based diagnoses to expectant parents. Counseling includes the short- and long-term medical prognosis, risks to the pregnant patient and fetus, and the impact of the diagnosis on the family unit. It is our obligation not only to educate the expectant patient and family regarding the fetal condition, but also to allow them the opportunity to make a fully informed decision regarding pregnancy, peripartum and postnatal care, for both themselves and their fetus.

Scientific statements and guidelines across major North American medical organizations endorse termination of pregnancy as essential healthcare<sup>1–5</sup>. There are medical diagnoses faced by pregnant patients in which interrupting the pregnancy is a medically sound option. The statement of the American Heart Association on the diagnosis and treatment of fetal cardiac disease advises that 'During the counseling session, the option of termination of pregnancy should be discussed'<sup>1</sup>, and goes on to emphasize that decision-making about pregnancy termination, non-intervention and palliative care at birth in case of severe anomalies is '... a complex and personal process'.

We strive toward providing families with all the resources and support necessary to come to the decision that is best for them. The United States Supreme Court's decision to overturn *Roe vs Wade* infringes on our duty to offer unbiased counseling and all reasonable medical management options to our pregnant patients. This decision will impact disproportionately the most vulnerable populations who do not have the resources to seek management options beyond their home state, adding further injustice to their situation. Our patients deserve the right to make a fully informed decision in the context of a potentially devastating or lethal fetal cardiovascular anomaly. We believe the option of safe and accessible interruption of pregnancy is critical for expectant parents in such circumstances, and limiting discussion and availability of this or any medical option may be harmful to those for whom we care.

Respectfully submitted by leaders within the Fetal Heart Society Community: Bhawna Arya, Mary T. Donofrio, Lindsay R. Freud, Lisa K. Hornberger, Anita J. Moon-Grady, Shaine A. Morris, Nelangi Pinto, Lynn L. Simpson, Bettina F. Cuneo, Allison Divanovic, Edgar Jaeggi, Shabnam Peyvandi, Michael D. Puchalski, Jack Rychik, David N. Schidlow, Shubhika Srivastava, Theresa A. Tacy, Wayne Tworetzky and Michael J. Walsh.

#### Disclaimer

The views of the authors expressed in this statement do not necessarily represent the views of all members of the Fetal Heart Society nor those of the corporate or academic sponsors or affiliated institutions.

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