

## **UK Doctors Say Abortion May Affect Mental Health**

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(March 18, 2008) Just as reports are circulating in the U.S. that the American Psychological Association may be on the verge of reiterating its view that abortion has no significant mental health impacts, the British Royal College of Psychiatrists released a statement saying women should not be allowed to have an abortion until they are counseled on the possible risk to their mental health.

“In view of the controversy on the risk to mental health of induced abortion,” writes the Royal College of Psychiatrists in a published statement, “we recommend that the Royal College of Psychiatrists update their 1994 report on this issue.”

While recognizing that current research on the subject is inconclusive, they acknowledge that there are many new studies indicating the presence of a range of mental disorders following abortion. A growing body of evidence, including a long-term study out of New Zealand published in 2006, is showing that abortion is linked with elevated levels of mental distress, including depression, substance abuse and suicide, in young women.

Therefore, the College is recommending a “full systematic review around abortion and mental health,” in order to “ensure that women’s mental health is protected whether they seek abortion or continue with a pregnancy.”

While the British statement also addressed concerns about the mental health status of women in difficult situations who elect to carry their babies to term, it clearly calls for more information to be given to women contemplating abortion that it may have adverse impact on their psychological well being.

Informed consent is good practice, the College states, but “Consent cannot be informed without the provision of adequate and appropriate information regarding the possible risks and benefits to physical and mental health.

“This may require the updating of patient information leaflets approved by the relevant Royal Colleges, and education and training to relevant health care professionals, in order to develop a good practice pathway.”

The statement overturns a long-held consensus that the risk to mental health of continuing with an unwanted pregnancy outweighs the risks of living with the possible regrets of having an abortion. One of the pro-abortion lobby's most common claims is that “unwanted” pregnancy can cause enormous psychological strain for women, up to and including being a precursor to suicide.

Ironically, more than 90 percent of Britain’s 200,000 annual abortions are carried out on the grounds of a woman’s “mental health.”

Dr Peter Saunders, general secretary of the UK Christian Medical Fellowship, is quoted in London's *TimesOnline* as asking, "How can a doctor now justify an abortion [on mental health grounds] if psychiatrists are questioning whether there is any clear evidence that continuing with the pregnancy leads to mental health problems?"

The Royal College announcement comes in the wake of the tragic suicide death of a promising 30 year old British artist, Emma Beck, who hanged herself after being overcome by grief over the abortion her twin babies.

"Living is hell for me," she wrote in a suicide note. "I should never have had an abortion. I see now I would have been a good mum. I want to be with my babies; they need me, no one else does."

Her note went on to explain, "I told everyone I didn't want to do it, even at the hospital. I was frightened, now it is too late. I died when my babies died."

During the inquest into her death, Beck's doctor said it was known that she was being pressured into the abortion by her boyfriend and that she had "no support." She was given the phone number of a pregnancy counseling service, British doctors are not required to do so.

Acceptance of a possible link between abortion and mental health issues in women is still being resisted by American professional medical associations.

However, one of the first significant acknowledgments of this association was included in the 2007 opinion handed down by the United States Supreme Court upholding the Partial Birth Abortion Ban of 2003.

On page 29 of the opinion, Justice Kennedy wrote: ". . . It seems unexceptional to conclude some women come to regret their choice to abort the infant life they once created and sustained. Severe depression and loss of esteem can follow."

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Learn the facts about the link between abortion and women's mental health. See "Healing the Pain of Abortion" with experts Theresa Burke, Ph.D., David Reardon, Ph.D. and Maria Steele, available now for only \$5.00 in our store at [www.womenofgrace.com/catalog](http://www.womenofgrace.com/catalog)