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New Research Links Abortion With Depression, Other Mental Health Problems



A New Zealand researcher who identifies himself as "pro-choice," an atheist and a rationalist has published a study linking abortion with an increased risk for mental health problems and he criticized the American Psychological Association for its absolutist stance claiming no link between abortion and mental health.

Dr. David M. Fergusson's study, published in the widely respected *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry* found that compared to women who had never been pregnant and women who had been pregnant but never had an abortion, women who had abortions were at a higher risk for suicide, major depression, anxiety disorder and drug dependence.

In an interview on Australian radio Fergusson said he is pro-abortion but thinks it is important to have as much information about the effects of abortion as possible. "My view is I'm pro-choice, and I believe that women do have the right to have a choice to abortion. So I don't see these results as being against that position, but it does show, as with any surgical procedure, or any procedure of any form, that there are risks and benefits that need to be taken into account and to be weighed up very carefully."

Fergusson said he conducted the research because he did not think there had been enough study on the subject. "The whole topic has been remarkably under-researched . . . there's been a lot of debate about whether abortion does or does not have harmful effects, but the amount of research into the harms of abortion, or its benefits for that matter, has been very limited."

The report examined a group of more than 500 girls who have been studied from birth to age 25. While it has long been acknowledged that women who have had

abortions have higher rates of depression and other mental health problems, there has been dispute over whether or not this was because abortion caused mental health problems or because women with mental health problems were more likely to have abortions. By studying such a large cohort of women over such a long period of time, Fergusson said he was able to take into account and eliminate factors like socio-economic background, family life and previous history of mental illness.

Fergusson noted that his findings were at odds with many in the mainstream of psychology who have steadfastly rejected a link between abortion and depression. "In particular, in its 2005 statement on abortion, the American Psychological Association concluded that 'well designed studies of psychological responses following abortion have consistently shown that risk of psychological harm is low . . . the percentage of women who experience clinically relevant distress is small and appears to be no greater than in general samples of women of reproductive age' . . . This relatively strong conclusion about the absence of harm from abortion was based on a relatively small number of studies which had one or more of the following limitations: a) absence of comprehensive assessment of mental disorders; b) lack of comparison groups; and c) limited statistical controls. Furthermore, the statement appears to disregard the findings of a number of studies that had claimed to show negative effects for abortion."

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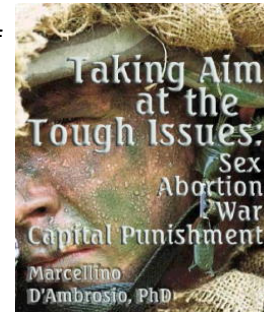
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