

Informed Choice — Mental Health and Abortion

by Chuck Colson; Tuesday, January 23, 2007

During the thirty-fourth anniversary of *Roe v. Wade*, you heard a great deal about the victims of abortion. That phrase — for obvious reasons — nearly always referred to the tens of millions of unborn children who have been killed as the result of *Roe*.

But there is another group of victims whose plight receives much less attention: the women themselves. And the fault for this lack of attention can be laid at the feet of those who claim to be defending their “right to choose.”

A recent example of their plight is a study published in the *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*. In it, researchers from New Zealand explored possible “linkages between unwanted pregnancy, abortion and long-term mental health.”

It is important to point out that David Fergusson, L. John Horwood, and Elizabeth Ridder were not setting out to prove that abortion is bad for women’s health. There’s no evidence, or even a suggestion, that they are partisans in the debates over abortion.

Instead, their goal was to either confirm or disprove previous studies that did find a link between having an abortion and things like “substance abuse, anxiety, hostility, low self-esteem, [and] depression.”

Using data from a longitudinal study of 25-year-olds in the Christchurch, New Zealand, area, they compared three groups of women: those who had never been pregnant, those who had been pregnant but had not had an abortion, and those who had had an abortion.

After controlling for factors such as socio-economic status and home life, they found “significant differences” between those who had had an abortion and those who had not. There were greater instances of depression, drug use, suicidal thoughts, and total mental health problems.

The authors concluded that their results were consistent “with the view that exposure to abortion was associated with increased risks of mental health problems” — the increases as much as 33 and 42 percent.

As I said, the authors were just looking for the facts. They are not partisans in the debate over abortion, but I am. So I will say what they did not: If some behavior or environmental factor increased people’s chances of serious health problems by more than a third, there would be outraged calls for regulation, or at the very minimum, they would demand adequate notice and warnings.

Any behavior but abortion, that is. As the authors of the study pointed out, theirs is but the most recent in a line of peer-reviewed studies that suggest that having an abortion is bad for a woman’s mental health.

Yet, giving that information to pregnant women is seen as an unacceptable infringement on their “right to choose.” It is the glaring exception to the overall trend today toward giving people more information — not less — about health risks.

Pro-abortionists apparently think that uninformed “choice” is the best kind. That makes their claim to be “pro-woman” ring hollow.

All of us ought to want women to know all the risks involved in having an abortion. They should know that there are two victims of what they are considering.