

# Abortion Kills More Mothers Than Childbirth

by Tim Drake

For years abortion practitioners have claimed that abortion is safer than childbirth. A recent study, however, conducted by the Elliot Institute and published in the August issue of *Southern Medical Journal*, has turned the table on that claim. The study reveals that women who have abortions are at a significantly higher risk of death than women who give birth. So far, the secular media have largely ignored the study. Researchers examined the death records for approximately 173,000 low-income California women and discovered that women who had abortions were almost twice as likely to die in the following two years and that the elevated mortality rate of aborting women persisted over at least eight years. During the eight-year period studied, women who aborted had a 154% higher risk of death from suicide, an 82% higher risk of death from accidents and a 44% higher risk of death from natural causes.

*The Southern Medical Journal* is not the first to reveal a correlation between abortion and mortality. A 1997 Finnish study reported that women who had abortions were 76% more likely to die in the year following abortion compared to non-pregnant women. It also found that, compared to women who carry to term, women who abort are 3.5 times more likely to die within a year. Furthermore, a subset of the same data reported that the risk of death from suicide within a year of an abortion was more than seven times higher than the risk of suicide within a year of childbirth.

The recent study confirms the trend discovered in Finland and is the first American study to use a uniform standard for comparing deaths associated with prior abortions and births. It is also the third study released in recent months that has largely been ignored by the media. "This problem has been ignored for decades," said David Reardon, director of the Elliot Institute, "largely at the behest of population control groups which are more concerned about protecting abortion than protecting women."

## Marla's Story

Thomas and Deborah Cardamone are not surprised by the research. Thirteen years ago, the couple lost their only child, 18-year-old Marla, as the result from complications arising from an abortion. Approximately 18 weeks pregnant, Marla feared that antidepressant medications she had been taking had harmed her baby. Reluctantly she went to Pittsburgh's Magee Women's Hospital on August 15, 1989, for an abortion. "They had used a needle to remove amniotic fluid, inserted laminaria into her cervix and did an instillation of urea to induce the abortion," said Marla's mother Deborah. "When Marla came out of the room she had tears in her eyes and said that she was in much pain. My only consolation was that she was in a major hospital." Deborah stayed with her daughter until about 11:00 PM. "It was the last time I saw Marla alive," she said.

Unbeknownst to medical staff, during the preliminary abortion procedure Marla had been invaded by a fast-acting blood infection called septicemia. She died the next morning. "When they finally let me see her, I kept thinking they had made a mistake," recalled Deborah. "She was distorted and swollen from the infection. Her face was purple. The whites of her eyes were yellow. The only thing I could recognize on my daughter was her hair."

It wasn't until eight years later, just prior to going to trial, that the family received an undisclosed settlement from the hospital. Louisville KY, attorney Ted Amshoff represented the family. He is one of only a few abortion malpractice attorneys in the country. "I began receiving referrals of women who had been injured by abortion in the 1980's from organizations and other attorneys who were not comfortable with the issue," Amshoff said. "To date, Amshoff and Smith has successfully resolved, by judgement or settlement, 12 cases against abortionists resulting in settlements in excess of \$14 million." Amshoff has represented cases in Pennsylvania, Colorado, Alabama, Kentucky, Texas, Tennessee, Virginia, New York and Connecticut. "The cases have run the gamut from independent abortionists to major hospitals and national chains," Amshoff added.

## Ignoring the Issue

The mortality study is actually the Elliot Institute's fourth study published in a major medical journal. These and other studies suggest the elevated mortality rates after abortion could be connected to negative psychological reactions to abortion. The institute's first study, released in January and published in the *British Medical Journal*, revealed that women who abort have more subsequent depression than women who carry unintended pregnancies to term. A later study printed in the *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry* revealed higher rates of treatment for mental illness

following abortion. Their most recent study published in the *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry* showed that children of women who had abortions had less supportive environments and more behavior problems. "The research certainly confirms what I have seen in my own practice. It fits with my experience," said Dr. Martha Shuping, a psychiatrist who has been involved in post-abortion work in Winston-Salem, NC, since 1984.

According to Rachel's Vineyard founder Theresa Burke, mental-health issues among post abortive women commonly manifest themselves in eating disorders, substance abuse, clinical depression and suicide. Dr. Paul Vitz, professor of psychology at New York University, said it would not be abnormal for some post-abortive women to experience flashbacks or depression. "Abortion for many women is a serious trauma," Vitz said. "It falls clearly within post-traumatic stress disorder, which is an official category of mental pathology in the DSM-IV [Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, widely used by psychiatrists and psychologists for diagnoses]. It is not always, but in many cases, a trauma that clearly meets the criteria for things that can cause stress in the DSM, but for political, ideological and financial reasons, the official psychological association will not admit it."

Yet, despite the institute's findings, the research has been ignored by the media and pro-abortion organizations such as National Abortion and Reproductive rights Action League and Planned Parenthood. Neither organization was willing to comment on the recent study. "If these groups had an answer, they would give it," Shuping said. "I believe that they know there's a problem and they don't know what to say about it." Both the American Psychiatric Association and the American Medical Association, Shuping said, have gone on record saying that there is no such thing as post-abortion syndrome. "I've examined the studies they cited, and you can see in those studies that there were people who had post abortion-related-problems, but they didn't make up the majority in those studies," Shuping said. "With more than 40 million abortions performed in the US, even if only 10% of women present a problem, that's still millions of women. Even some of the pro-abortion studies confirm that, so why should it be a surprise if we find that some women do have problems?"

Reardon finds the media silence puzzling. "Reuters [news service] can run a story showing that a study found an association between beer and good cholesterol, but with abortion they have a different standard," Reardon said. It's not as if the institute hasn't done its homework. Each of the institute's studies has been submitted to major medical journals and has gone through a thorough peer review process. "The study is submitted to a journal editor who then sends it to others that are deemed experts in the field. The journal then makes recommendations for changes or rejects the study. It takes anywhere from six months to a year before it's published," Reardon explained. Statistician Iain Murray, writing for *Tech Central Station*, has disagreed with the study's findings. Murray described the study as flawed because it didn't take into account whether the subjects were married.

"The Elliot Institute study found a 93% greater chance of death by homicide among women who had aborted. Yet the latest National Criminal Victimization Survey shows persons who are married are much less likely to be victims of violence than persons who have either never married or are divorced or separated. This is because married people are much less likely to place themselves in risky situations. Marital status might therefore account for some of the difference in outcomes after pregnancy," Murray said.

Reardon agrees that further research is necessary, but he doubts whether marital status alone would impact the differences associated with death following abortion. "The 1997 Finland study did take marital status into account. It revealed a sevenfold increased risk of suicide in the year following abortion and found that while marital status did have an effect, it was not enough to explain away the differences," Reardon said. "While there may be confounding factors, or other causes," Reardon continued, "at this point the preponderance of evidence shows that abortion is connected with elevated mortality rates." While the media might ignore the evidence, those who work in post-abortion counseling say the evidence can't be hidden forever.

"Post-abortive women are trying to break the denial that exists in our society," said Theresa Bonopartis, founder of the post-abortion referral network Lumina. Thirty years ago, while still a teenager, Bonopartis had an abortion. "No one wants to believe that we exist. Yet, there are over 4,000 abortions in our country every day," she said. "These people are everywhere. They are in our workplaces, our churches, our neighborhoods and our families. Just because few have verbalized it doesn't mean it doesn't exist."

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