Study Guide

Introduction

There are few procedures within medicine, if any, that have fueled as much ethical and moral debate as the question of abortion. This lecture will focus not on whether or not abortion is ethical or moral but on the way in which physicians deal with this procedure in their training, practice, and ways they assist and advise patients who request it. Thus we will discuss abortion in terms of the history of a procedure legally done within the United States. The lecture will focus on the following areas.

A history of Abortion – from Ancient Rome to modern day
Statistics about Abortion and Pregnancy within the US and Worldwide
How are abortions performed? What is a “partial-birth” abortion?
What are the current requirements for training residents in abortions and how are abortionists viewed within the world of medicine.

Objectives

At the end of this unit you will be able to:
1. Understand and explain the historical perspectives surrounding the moral and ethical issues relating to termination of pregnancy.
2. To dispel some of the myths concerning who is undergoing abortions, what the indication for an abortion is and to have a better understanding of how and where they are performed.
3. Understand and explain some of the relevant medical, ethical, and moral, issues surrounding the issue of abortion.

Preparation

1. Read the required readings
2. Read the Case Studies

Process

1. Class will begin in lecture hall with Michael Vetrano, PhD and Todd R. Griffin, MD from the Department of Obstetrics & Gynecology.
2. After lecture we will adjourn to section to discuss the case study

Study Questions

1. What factors shape physician attitudes toward providing abortions?
2. What socio-economic factors influence patients choice of and access to abortion?
3. What developments in medicine affect the availability of abortion and the morbidity and mortality associated with the procedure?
4. How are abortions funded in this country. How does funding affect availability
5. What training in surgical abortion are physicians required to receive? Do the same obligations apply to medical abortion?
6. If Ob/Gyn residents do morally oppose abortion, do they have a right to refuse to learn or participate in abortions?
7. See questions specific to each case.
Articles on File

- ACOG guide: Ethical Decision Making in Obstetrics and Gynecology
- Carol Joffe: Reactions to Medical Abortion Among Providers Of Surgical Abortion: An Early Snapshot

Resource Links

- AMA report on Criminal Abortion, 1859 (150 years ago the AMA was a leading force against medical abortion.)
- Carol Joffe, Reactions to Medical Abortion Among Providers Of Surgical Abortion: An Early Snapshot, Family Planning Perspectives, Volume 31, No. 1, January/February 1999
- CDC: Abortion Surveillance - United States, 1999

Instructor Biography

Todd W. Griffin, MD
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