



Statement on upcoming referendum on the Eighth Amendment of the Irish constitution

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Ireland will hold a referendum in May, the vote will ask Irish citizens whether they want to retain the Eighth Amendment of the constitution, which recognises the equal right to life for mothers and unborn children during pregnancy and is the main protection for the unborn child. MaterCare International (MCI) believes that if repealed this protection will be lost. Added to this the recent Supreme Court decision in disagreeing that the unborn child has other rights which are conferred after birth will introduce a process of gradualism to allow for abortion on demand at all stages of intrauterine life. This has begun with the Irish government's proposal for a law for the regulation of termination of pregnancy which promises legislation to permit abortion on demand up to twelve weeks of gestation. As this process develops, early abortion will become a method of birth control, using over the counter abortifacients, the law will be extended in due course to permit abortion for “hard cases”, e.g. Down Syndrome, Spina Bifida etc. and then later in pregnancy. As a consequence, this will result in serious unintended consequences for the medical, midwifery and nursing professions, and hospitals as historical and my own empirical evidence has shown in other jurisdictions.

The UK 'Abortion Act' of 1967¹, the first in a Western country, brought about a fundamental change in practice of obstetrics and midwifery. The Act was supposedly intended initially for hard cases (e.g. to prevent a maternal mortality or in the case of rape) and made abortion legal up to 28 weeks gestation. Through this process of gradualism developed with the inevitable result that abortion on demand became a matter of choice and the basis on which maternal health care is provided. The final objective presently proposed by the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of England is to have abortion decriminalized altogether.²

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abortion_Act_1967

² <https://www.rcog.org.uk/en/news/rcog-backs-decriminalisation-of-abortion/>

In 1969, Canada followed in the UK's legislative footsteps and introduced abortion under certain circumstances. Gradually these circumstances increased such that today in 2018, Canada has no law protecting the unborn and abortion is permissible at any time of intrauterine unborn life. In both countries named above, abortion has become the basis on which maternal health care is provided.

The unintended consequences of the passage of liberal abortion laws for doctors and midwives is considerable, especially for those who have taken a fundamental stand in defence of human life and refuse to cooperate with the provision of any abortion services. They are now considered "ultra conservative", "professionally outdated" and even possibly considered "negligent", denying women's "right" and are being subjected to the displeasure of tyrannical professional associations and government health departments. A legal safeguard in law was supposed to be a conscientious objection clause, but this has been removed in Canada, by the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario (CPSO) *Professional Obligations and Human Rights* which has a new policy³ requiring physicians and surgeons to make referrals when their consciences will not allow them to cooperate with a particular procedure or treatment. The World Medical Association's proposed policy changes will explicitly require referral and also will require that a physician who objects must nevertheless provide "safe abortion" in some circumstances. The practice of medicine is being forced to change from one of a covenant of trust with all patients to one which is simply a contractual agreement.

A process of profound change in the appreciation of the dignity of all life from conception until natural death has begun simply by holding this referendum on the Eighth Amendment added to which is the Supreme court's decision. To be sure even if the amendment is retained the effort to introduce liberal abortion laws will be continued, supported by governments, the pro-abortion lobby backed by lots of money. Inevitably if the decision is to remove the amendment, gradually the dignity and right to life of the aged, of those with terminal illness will come under threat as euthanasia and physician assisted suicide will be introduced as a "medical" service. The medical, midwifery and nursing professions will be forced to deny their faith beliefs and consciences to use their skills to solve societies perceived problems.

By voting to retain the eighth amendment to the constitution the Irish people will become the last bastion of hope for the unborn and an example for the world.

*-Dr. Robert Walley
Executive Director,
MaterCare International (MCI)*

*8 Riverview Avenue, St John's, NL A1C 2S5, Canada
Telephone: (709)579-6472
Toll Free:(888) 579 - 6472
Fax: (709)579-6501
Email: info@matercare.org*
