

## **Response to the American Board of Obstetrics and Gynecology (ABOG) proposal for a new board certification titled “Complex Family Planning” focusing on late term abortions**

The American Board of Obstetrics and Gynecology (ABOG) is seeking approval for an ob/gyn subspecialty certification in “Complex Family Planning”, focusing on late term abortions, from the American Board of Medical Specialties.

We, MaterCare International, (MCI), a professional international organization of obstetricians and gynecologists, maintain that creating a new subspecialty for this field of obstetrics is unnecessary and incorrectly links the practice of late term abortion to the field of maternal health. When considering the mission and vocation of obstetricians is to serve mothers and their unborn children, including the necessity to maintain their relationship with patients, their families, as well as the need to maintain a positive public image of this field, it is easy to see why late term abortion is not compatible with the obstetrical care and practice.

Physicians are well-trained during post-graduate specialist training in clinical issues and procedures that are to be included in the proposed new subspecialty program. They are also covered by the standard Obstetrics and Gynecology residency program. Training in management of high-risk pregnancies is also already fully accomplished through the Maternal/Fetal Medicine subspecialty board certification. This certification is designed to care for both the mother and the child, unborn or born. Doctors who obtained it are able to recognize female reproductive system disorders and pregnancy complications and to treat them in a timely and appropriate manner. This applies, among others, to problems related to family planning, proceedings after miscarriage, and fetal death.

The head of the American Board of Obstetrics and Gynecology claims that the doctors' skills in performing late abortions are too narrow in scope, and under this pretext they have proposed the new sub-specialty, “Complex Family Planning” which focuses on abortion and late term abortion. However, abortion is not and should not be considered a family planning method, even its most staunch advocates acknowledge this. Through each stage of pregnancy abortion is the effective death of a child in the prenatal period of development and has a physical and mental impact on the health of the mother. Performed in advanced pregnancy, abortion poses a greater threat to the mother's reproductive and mental health while simultaneously causing more intense physical and mental suffering of the baby being killed who is at this stage fully aware of pain, anxiety and stress.

The American Board of Medical Specialties should recognize that the doctor's vocation is to prevent premature death, reduce physical and mental suffering, and cure disease. Advocating for and ordering doctors to perform abortion, especially late term abortion, contradicts this vocation, causes a conflict of conscience, professional burnout, and difficulties in maintaining open lines of communication with colleagues, staff and patients. Consider this in any other field; Are firemen ordered to set fire to forests or lifeguards ordered to drown swimmers? Of course not, recommending and emphasizing training for doctors to kill patients destroys their patients' trust and hinders their recovery. It is also an immense waste of time and resources that could be better used to serve patients live healthy and happy lives.

If in a given country abortion were permitted by law, it could be made legal also to have abortions performed outside public health services by special technologists as for example capital punishment in the USA, allowing physicians and public hospitals to perform their duties in accordance with the principles of medical deontology. The killing of patients is not part of the covenant doctor/patient relationship, which is crucial for both treatment and diagnosis of disease. Without a patient's trust in the practitioner, the doctor will fail to treat the patient to the best of their ability. The practice of abortion, and especially second and third trimester abortion, has no place in the field of medicine. The support and approval of this proposal from the American Board of Medical Specialties is incomprehensible.

In light of the above statement, we urge the American Board of Specialties to deny the ABOG's proposal for a new board certification titled “Complex Family Planning”.

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