

A Painful Choice: Abortion's Link to Breast Cancer

Since 1973, unregulated abortion-on-demand has been a reality in the United States; in other countries, "legal" abortion has existed even longer. Proponents of "reproductive freedom" and "a woman's right to choose" have elevated these clichés above the value of the unborn. Now, documented scientific evidence of the link between induced abortion and breast cancer reveals that the pro-abortion movement may be elevating this "right" above the very lives of women, as well.

Continuous Increase

Does it seem like breast cancer is more common than ever? Nearly every woman knows someone—her mother, aunt, sister, daughter or friend—who has been diagnosed with this life-threatening disease. And it makes sense. Statistics reveal that breast cancer will strike one in eight American women at some point during their lifetime. In 1999 alone, 176,300 new cases of breast cancer were diagnosed, and 43,700 women died from the disease.¹

Further, according to the American Cancer Society, data since 1940 show a *large increase* in the incidence of invasive breast cancer in the United States.²

- ♦ From 1940 to 1982, cases increased steadily about 1 percent per year.
- ♦ From 1982 to 1988, the rate grew about 4 percent per year.
- ♦ From 1988 to 1996, incidence rates remained approximately level.³

The public accepts many causes of breast cancer. The chance of breast cancer increases with age. Genetic risk, family history, early onset of menstrual periods (before age 12) and late onset of menopause (after age 50) are also factors of increased risk.⁴

An expert hired by pro-abortion Planned Parenthood admitted the abortion/breast cancer link in court testimony. When asked whether a 15 year old is more likely to contract breast cancer if she has an abortion than if she gives birth, Lynn Rosenberg, Sc.D., replied, "Probably, yes."

Avoidable Risk

But abortion—an *avoidable* risk factor—is too often denied by the scientific community, despite the publication of solid research in many respected medical journals. Published research on the breast cancer risk of abortion dates back at least to 1957.

Dr. Joel Brind is a leading breast cancer researcher who has specialized in the abortion/breast cancer link (ABC link) since 1992. He has found, to date, 33 independent studies worldwide that present data on induced abortion and the incidence of breast cancer. Eighteen of the 33 studies report an alarming increase in the overall risk of breast cancer among women who have had one or more abortions. These 18 studies show a statistically significant increase, which means there is greater than a 95 percent certainty that the findings are not due to chance. Data from all studies show an increased risk of 30 percent.⁵

Dr. Brind is a professor of biology, specializing in human biology and endocrinology, at Baruch College of the City University of New York. He has found that studies on American

women show an even more consistent effect of abortion on the risk of future breast cancer. Out of 14 studies, 13 show that women who have an abortion increase their risk for breast cancer.⁶ Eight show a statistically significant overall increased risk averaging 35 percent.⁷

In 1994, an American study showed even more striking results. These concern abortion's impact on women who have a family history of breast cancer, a known risk factor. Dr. Janet Daling of the prestigious Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center in Seattle headed the study. Notably, the National Cancer Institute, a division of the National Institutes of Health, commissioned it.

Dr. Daling reported an overall 50-percent risk increase in women who had undergone an abortion.⁸ In women who had a mother, sister, grandmother, aunt or daughter who had contracted breast cancer, the risk increase jumped to 80 percent. But an even more shocking finding was discovered. It concerned women with a family history of the disease who had also had an abortion before age 18. Of the 12 such women who participated in the study, all 12 had been diagnosed with breast cancer by the age of 45.⁹

Flawed Research

Despite the abundance of solid data, public health agencies such as the American Cancer Society and the National Cancer Institute still fail to warn women of the evidence that abortion is a risk factor for breast cancer. In fact, in 1997, Dr. Patricia Hartge of the National Cancer Institute wrote an editorial published in the *New England Journal of Medicine*. Women need no longer "worry about the risk of breast cancer when facing the difficult decision of whether to terminate a pregnancy," she declared.¹⁰ She referred to a Danish study published in that issue. It claims that abortions have no impact on breast cancer risk.

Dr. Mads Melbye led that study. Using Denmark's computer registry system, it encompassed all 1.5 million women born in that country between 1935 and 1978. More than 280,000 of them have had legal abortions, and more than 10,000 have had breast cancer.

The study concludes, "Induced abortions have no overall effect on the risk of breast cancer." Again, those who support a woman's "right to choose" jumped to publicize the results.

But Dr. Brind has found serious flaws in the study.¹¹ First, although abortion has been legal in Denmark since 1939, the Melbye study used computerized abortion records beginning only with 1973. Thus, it missed 60,000 women who had abortions before 1973. In addition, more than 300 women who got breast cancer between 1968 and 1973 were included in the study. Because all of them are listed as not having had abortions, this error artificially lowers the relative risk between abortion and breast cancer.

Second, the study includes 350,000 women born between 1968 and 1978 who were under age 25 when the study ended in

There is a real risk involving abortion and breast cancer, and people should know about this risk so that if they decide to have an abortion, they do it with full knowledge.

Leon Bradlow, Ph.D., director of the Laboratory of Biochemical Endocrinology, Strong-Cornell Cancer Research

1992. Very few women get breast cancer at those ages, and they account for only eight cases, or less than one-tenth of one percent of cases of breast cancer in the study.

Third, authors of the study adjusted for the year in which the women were born, which is to reflect the acknowledged fact that the age-adjusted incidence of breast cancer rose throughout most of the 20th century. No one definitely knows why breast cancer has increased, but abortion could certainly be a cause. It has risen similarly during this time frame (see figure).¹¹

If abortion is a factor in the risk of breast cancer, Melbye's adjustment necessarily nullifies it. Thus, the no-increased risk he finds for breast cancer is virtually guaranteed.

It is also important to note that, like the Daling study, the Melbye study found an increased breast cancer risk (29 percent) among women who had an abortion as teens.¹² However, the conclusion avoided mentioning this statistic, which was not statistically significant, because of the small number of women in their study who fell into this category. The small number is due to the 1973 inception of the computerized abortion registry.

Despite these major flaws, the Melbye study is being used to keep the truth about the link between abortion and breast cancer from women. It is troubling that some members of the medical and scientific communities are often the agents of this misinformation.

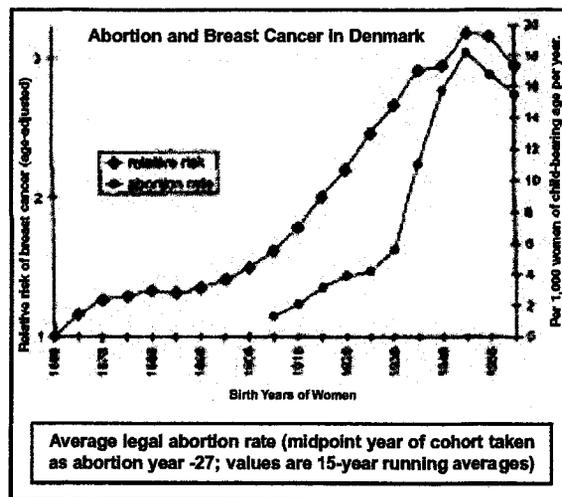
Biological Link

So what is the biological connection between abortion and breast cancer? In a woman's body, the hormone estrogen is key in stimulating the growth of any reproductive tumors, especially breast cancer. How much exposure a woman's body has to estrogen largely determines her risk for breast cancer.

When a girl reaches puberty, her body begins to produce estrogen. The greatest surge occurs early in a pregnancy. Estrogen causes the breast tissue and breast cells to grow. If abnormal cells exist in her breast, a potential tumor may be stimulated to grow at this time. In early pregnancy, these immature breast cells are much more susceptible to cancer-causing agents, because they are constantly dividing and can more easily develop into cancer cells.

At the end of a full-term pregnancy, a woman's breasts fully mature and are able to secrete milk. This, in effect, counterbalances the initial surge of estrogen, because the breast cells no longer divide. Thus, they are less susceptible to cancer-causing agents. However, when a pregnancy is terminated by abortion, the capacity for the woman's breast cells to grow is not switched off. So, while a full-term pregnancy increases a woman's protection from cancer, an abortion increases her risk of cancer because it leaves more carcinogen-vulnerable cells behind in the breast.¹³

As groups such as Planned Parenthood and the National Abortion and Reproductive Rights Action League continue to promote abortion and denounce its link to breast cancer, information about the ABC link is crucial. Because more than 1 million abortions take place in this country each year, Dr. Brind estimates an *additional 40,000 cases of breast cancer* will result annually by the year 2020. This is a 21 percent increase! An abortion does not guarantee that a woman will develop breast cancer, but it does significantly increase her risk.



"I have three sisters with breast cancer, and I resent people messing with scientific data to further their own agenda, be they pro-choice or pro-life. I would have loved to have found no association between breast cancer and abortion, but our research is rock solid, and our data is accurate. It's not a matter of believing; it's a matter of what is."

Dr. Janet Daling (who is pro-choice) of the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center

Legal Actions

Members of the legal profession have begun to shine the spotlight on the ABC link. A U.S. court has already ruled that the claim that induced abortion increases breast cancer risk is credible. In Pennsylvania, Christ's Bride's Ministries sued Southeast Pennsylvania Transit Authority because it refused to display an ad warning women about abortion and breast cancer. The ad read, "Women who choose abortion suffer more and deadlier breast cancer."

In 1998, a U.S. Federal Appeals Court returned a unanimous decision in favor of CBM, which the U.S. Supreme Court allowed to stand in 1999.

Also in 1998, attorney John Kindley wrote a widely read article in the *Wisconsin Law Review* on informed consent and the ABC link. Mr. Kindley wrote "to show that the current level of scientific evidence linking induced abortion with increased breast cancer risk is *sufficient to support an ethical and legal duty to disclose fully the risk* to women who are considering pregnancy termination [emphasis added]."¹⁴

"There is substantial medical research in peer-reviewed journals which supports the claim that having an abortion increases the risk of developing breast cancer," writes Mr. Kindley,¹⁵ who expects the ABC link/informed consent issue to mushroom into a national trend.

Mr. Kindley is the attorney for the plaintiff in *Mattson v. MKB Management Corporation dba Red River Women's Clinic*, a case that has the potential to set legal precedent for the ABC link. Filed in December 1999, the lawsuit alleges that a pamphlet distributed to prospective abortion patients at the clinic in Fargo, North Dakota, is misleading and constitutes false advertising. The pamphlet states: "Anti-abortion activists claim that having an abortion increases the risk of developing breast cancer and endangers future childbearing. None of these claims are supported by medical research or established medical organizations."

Concerning this case, executive director and attorney for the North Dakota Catholic Conference, Christopher Dodson, stated that state law not only forbids false advertising, but also requires all abortion providers to give a woman seeking an abortion

information on the "medical risks" associated with it. According to Dodson, any woman who has received an abortion and was not told of the possible link between induced abortion and breast cancer might be able to sue the clinic that performed the procedure.¹⁶

Right to Know

Women seeking information on abortion should hear about all the risks it presents. They have the right to know an abortion will increase their risk of breast cancer—compared to the level of protection they receive if they carry the baby to term. As CWA continues to fight abortion-on-demand laws, we encourage you to act on this information! Write your elected officials about the evidence linking abortion and breast cancer. Tell them you want laws passed to inform women of the dangers associated with abortion, including the higher risk of breast cancer. Write letters to your local newspaper. Call radio talk shows. Any action will help save lives. Together, we will enable women to see that abortion is not the answer; it only causes more pain. Concerned Women for America has issued this brochure to save lives. When it comes to breast cancer, your opinion about abortion should be irrelevant. This is a potentially deadly issue of women's health. Regardless of where you stand in the debate over abortion, investigate for yourself. It could save your life—or the life of someone you love.

1 Roy Parkins, "Does Abortion Increase Breast Cancer Risk?" *Journal of the National Cancer Institute* 85 (1993): 1987-88.
 2 North Florida Women's Health and Counseling Services, Inc., et al. v. State of Florida, No. 99-3202 (Fla. Cir. Ct. filed Nov. 18, 1999).
 3 Joe Gelman, L.A. Daily News, 28 September 1997, 3.
 4 Graph by Dr. Joel Brind.
 5 American Cancer Society, 1999, 4.
 6 *Breast Cancer Facts and Figures 1999-2000* (Atlanta, GA: American Cancer Society, 1999). (http://www.cancer.org/statistics/99bcff/occurrence.html).
 7 Thankfully, since 1989 death rates from breast cancer have decreased an average of 1.8 percent per year. This decline is attributed to improved treatments and mammography, which diagnose the disease at earlier stages (*Breast Cancer Facts and Figures 1999-2000*).
 8 "Estimating Breast Cancer Risk," National Cancer Institute press release, 6 October 1998, (http://rexx.nci.nih.gov/massmedia/press_releases/riskasses.html).
 9 Joel Brind, Ph.D., "Abortion, Breast Cancer, and Ideology," *First Things* 73 (May 1997): 12.
 10 M.C. Pike, et al., *British Journal of Cancer* 43 (1981): 72-76; Britton, et al., *British Journal of Cancer* 47 (1983): 757-62; Rosenberg, et al., *American Journal of Epidemiology* 127 (1988): 981-9; Howe, et al., *International Journal of Epidemiology* 18 (1989): 300-4; Laing, et al., *Journal of National Medical Association* 85 (1993): 931-9; Laing, et al., *Genetic Epidemiology* 11 (1994): A300; Dalling, et al., *Journal of the National Cancer Institute* 86 (1994): 1584-92; Dalling, et al., *American Journal of Epidemiology* 144 (1996): 373-80; Newcomb, et al., *Journal of the American Medical Association* 275 (1996): 283-7; Wu, et al., *British Journal of Cancer* 73 (1996): 680-6; Palmer, et al., *Cancer Causes and Control* 8 (1997): 841-9; Marcus, et al., *American Journal of Public Health* 89 (August 1999): 1244-7.
 11 Lazovich, et al., *Epidemiology* 11 (January 2000): 76-80.
 12 Rosenberg, et al., (1988); Howe, et al., (1989); Laing, et al., (1993); Dalling, et al., (1994); Dalling, et al., (1996).
 13 Newcomb, et al., (1996); Palmer, et al., (1997).
 14 J. Dalling, et al., *Journal of the National Cancer Institute* 86 (1994): 1584-92.
 15 *Ibid.*
 16 Partica Hartge, Sc.D., "Abortion, Breast Cancer and Epidemiology," *The New England Journal of Medicine* 336 (1997): 128.
 17 (http://www.rhej.org/content/1997/0336/0002/0127.asp).
 18 Brind, "Roten in Denmark," 1997 (http://www.abortion.cancer.com/denmark.htm).
 19 *Ibid.*
 20 Spontaneous abortions, or miscarriages, during the first trimester do not produce estradiol (estrogen secreted by the ovaries) in quantities exceeding nonpregnant levels and, therefore, do not increase the risk of breast cancer. The reason for most miscarriages is an inadequate supply of progesterone from which estradiol is made (http://www.abortioncancer.com/estren.htm).
 21 John Kindley, P.A., "The Abortion/Breast Cancer Link—Is it Real?" *Wisconsin Law Review*, 1998, (http://www.afterabortion.com/kindley_article.html).
 22 Kindley, "False Advertising Alleged in Lawsuit Against Fargo Abortion Clinic," (http://www.afterabortion.com/kindley_press.html).
 23 *Ibid.*

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Thanks to Dr. Joel Brind
 for reviewing this brochure
 for accuracy.