



Paper of

Women Hurt

delivered to

The Citizens' Assembly

on

05 March 2017

Paper from Women Hurt for the Citizens' Assembly

5th March 2017

Presented by Dr. Anthony Levatino

Dear Members of the Citizens' Assembly, my name is Dr Anthony Levatino. I am a board-certified obstetrician-gynecologist. I received my medical degree from Albany Medical College in Albany, NY, USA in 1976 and completed my OB-GYN residency training at Albany Medical Center in 1980. In my 36-year career, I have been privileged to practice obstetrics and gynecology in both private and university settings.

From June 1993 until September 2000, I was associate professor of OB-GYN at the Albany Medical College serving at different times as both medical student director and residency program director. I have also dedicated many years to private practice and currently serve as Clinical Professor and Chair of Obstetrics & Gynecology at the Burrell College of Osteopathic Medicine in Las Cruces, New Mexico.

During my residency training and during my first five years of private practice, I performed both first and second trimester abortions. In private practice, I performed approximately 1,200 abortions from 1980 through early 1985. Over 100 of them were second trimester Suction D&E procedures up to 24 weeks gestation. I am not going to go into all the graphic detail here of what precisely this entailed but it was ghastly and grim. It is worth reflecting though on why it is we talk about everything around abortion but not the procedure itself.

Former abortionists are among the voices least heard in public discussions of abortion laws. We are doctors who worked in the abortion industry for years but stopped when we became awakened to the horror of what we were involved in and couldn't face doing it any more. When I first started performing abortions, I sincerely believed I was helping women. I bought into all the rhetoric about "choice" and "progress for women" and ignored the reality before my own eyes for far too long— two unique and unrepeatable lives, a mother and her unborn baby. I performed ultrasounds on every patient but the women who placed their trust in me were rarely given an opportunity to see the humanity of their baby before the abortion started. After every abortion, I reassembled the body parts to make sure they were all there – arms, legs, head, chest – everything. Together, as a society, many comfort themselves in calling descriptions of abortion procedures "extreme" even though they are reality. After coming face to face with what I encountered on a daily basis performing abortions, I came to realise that what is actually extreme is denying the appalling reality of abortion and what it does to an innocent, defenceless child.

When I graduated from medical school in 1976, I was firmly "pro-choice". This was a decision between a woman, her doctor, and no one, including the baby's father, had anything to say about it. As I noted above, I performed almost 1200 abortions over a five year span including over 100 2nd trimester abortions up to 24 weeks gestation. Many of my medical colleagues have also left the abortion industry. Together, we came to see that we were simply hiding behind slogans and dishonest arguments to sustain the denial about what we were actually doing. It is amazing how you can deceive yourself into believing that destroying a new, beautiful, unmistakable and unrepeatable human life somehow represents progress. The disconnection between the rhetoric of "choice" and the reality of what actually happens during an abortion is staggering.

Very little has changed in the abortion industry. Some women are still being told that abortion is nothing more than removing "a clump of cells", a lie easily disproved with an ultrasound scan. Yet when abortionists are harvesting body parts of unborn babies for research, they talk about "intact hearts, livers and lungs". Some even use the word "baby". The betrayal of women is total. Future generations will look back in disgust and disdain at the casual, nonchalant way human life is disrespected today.

You might not see it reported in the media very often but Ireland without abortion has been a much safer country for pregnant mums than the US, where abortion has been legal since 1973¹. I have had to come to terms with the nightmare of working in the abortion industry. I encourage people to look behind the media headlines and sanitised interviews pushing abortion and seek out the truth of what really happens. As someone with strong family links to Ireland, I have a deep concern about the outcome of the current debate on the Eighth Amendment.

¹ http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/194254/1/9789241565141_eng.pdf?ua=1