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## "Evidence Doesn't Matter," APA Spokesperson Says

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According to a spokesperson for the American Psychological Association, the APA's pro-choice position, first adopted in 1969, is based on a civil rights view, not on scientific proof of any mental health benefits arising from abortion.

The admission that ideology, not science, governs the APA's support for abortion came in response to a request by a *Washington Times* columnist for the organization's reaction to a new study from New Zealand linking abortion to mental illness (see article beginning on page 1).

The New Zealand team's criticism of the APA's selective and strong assurances of the mental health benefits of abortion prompted Warren Throckmorton, a psychologist and newspaper columnist, to call the APA for comment on the criticisms. He was referred to Dr. Nancy Felipe Russo, an APA spokesperson on abortion and women's issues.

Russo was among the leaders within the APA who, in 1969, led the organization to adopt an official position in favor of abortion as a civil right. She has subsequently been active in research and advocacy efforts opposing parental notification and mandatory informed consent statutes related to abortion.

### **APA is Not Neutral On Abortion Science**

When asked to comment on the New Zealand study and the pro-choice authors' criticisms of the APA, Russo told Throckmorton that the APA's position on abortion was established on the view that abortion is a civil right.

As quoted in Throckmorton's *Washington Times* column, Russo explained that the Christchurch study would have no effect on the APA's position because "to pro-choice advocates, mental health effects are not relevant to the legal context of arguments to restrict access to abortion."

In the first draft of Throckmorton's column, which he sent to me for comment, Russo was quoted more bluntly, saying, "it doesn't matter what the evidence says." Throckmorton and Russo subsequently agreed to the clarification of her statement as it appeared in the *Washington Times*.

Russo's statements confirm the complaint of critics that the APA's briefs to the Supreme Court and state legislatures are really about promoting a view about civil rights, not science. Toward this end, the APA has set up task forces and divisions that include only psychologists who share the same bias in favor of abortion.

These task forces have actually served to stifle, rather than encourage, research. When researchers publish data showing abortion is linked to mental health problems, the APA's abortion policy police rush forward to tell the public to ignore the findings because they are out of line with their own "consensus" statements, which are positioned as the APA's official interpretation of the meaningful research on abortion.

### **Data, Not "Consensus"**

Thirty-five years ago, when the APA joined in the effort to legalize abortion, they insisted that abortion would fundamentally improve women's mental and physical health by sparing them the burden of unwanted children. But 38 million abortions later, there is still not a single statistically validated study that has shown that abortion has actually improved the lives of women who abort compared to those who carry to term.

Instead, if you look at the data instead of consensus opinions, depression rates are up, not down, among women who have had abortions. Suicide and substance abuse are up, not down. Premature deliveries are up, not down. But instead of including this data in their statements on abortion, the APA's self-selected panels of abortion advocates continue to put politics ahead of women's well being.

### **Sources**

Warren Throckmorton, "Abortion and mental health,"  
*Washington Times*, Jan. 21, 2005.



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