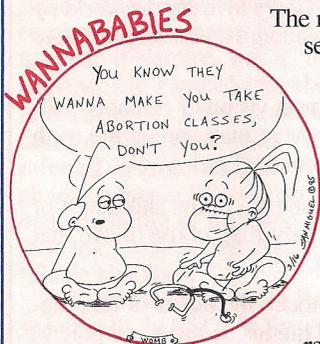


Choose Life...

March/April 1995

More News

Accreditation Council Trying to "Force" Med Students to Learn Abortion Procedures



The medical calling to healing and life is being seriously undermined by the recent decision to require residents in obstetrics programs to learn not only how to deliver babies but how to kill them in the womb.

On February 14, the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME) adopted a requirement that all obstetrics residency programs provide training in abortion by 1996. This would include teaching programs that have moral and religious objections to abortion, such as the numerous Catholic hospitals. Programs that do

not provide such training will lose accreditation and not qualify for federal reimbursements for the medical services resident doctors provide to patients. Catholic hospitals that do not provide abortion training must send their residents to other programs for abortion training in order for their program to be accredited. Residents who graduate from an unaccredited program usually have problems obtaining hospital privileges and board certification.

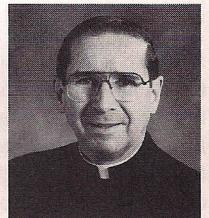
Although the mandate allows individuals to opt out of the training for moral or religious reasons, in fact, young doctors will be under considerable peer and institutional pressure to take the training, according to Dr. David Stevens, executive director of the Christian Medical and Dental Society. "The threat of failing to meet Graduate Medical Education requirements will now be like a sword of Damocles hanging over their heads as well as over the heads of program administrators". Moreover, a resident "can face intense pressure from colleagues who would be forced to take up the slack by performing more abortions." The mandate could also discourage pro-life medical students from becoming ob/gyns.

ACGME's curriculum change has been urged by the National Abortion Federation, Planned Parenthood, the Center for Reproductive Law and Policy, and the Feminist Majority Foundation. The ACGME is composed of five groups, including the American Medical Association and the American Hospital Association.

For those who care about unborn children, and the future of the healing profession, the abortion training mandate is a moral horror that needs to be legally overturned.

Cardinal Mahony and Pro-Life Leaders Protest Required Abortion Training for MDs

Cardinal Roger M. Mahony (Los Angeles), chairman of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee for Pro-Life Activities, protested the abortion training mandate for medical students in a February 13 letter to the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education:



Cardinal Mahony

"Coercing people and institutions to participate in the destruction of innocent life is a great evil. When such coercion is directed against people and institutions that embody a society's commitment to healing, moral outrage is the only appropriate response. I therefore find it difficult to believe that medical organizations would require doctors who specialize in caring for unborn children and their mothers to learn how to kill the former and jeopardize the physical, emotional and spiritual health of the latter."

Cardinal Mahony also objected to the proposal that Catholic health care institutions provide "mechanisms" to ensure abortion training in other programs for their residents: "We can no more establish 'mechanisms' to ensure the killing of an unborn child, at any location, than we could do so for the killing of the same child when born." He was particularly concerned about the harm that would come to the medical profession. "For a profession that ...places the killing of its patients on the same moral plane as their cure—has denied itself the status of a healing profession," the cardinal stated.

Currently half of the states have laws exempting hospitals from referring for abortion when the hospital is conscientiously opposed to it, according to Mark Chopko, general counsel of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops. Chopko said further that six states have specific statutory remedies "against any person that discriminates against a hospital for exercising its right to refuse to participate in or refer for these procedures."

The Catholic Health Association said it would "examine all options and consider all avenues of recourse to challenge" the new requirement. It said such a requirement "would compromise the Catholic ob/gyn programs as they try to conform to the standards and moral teachings of the Catholic Church."

Wanda Franz, PH.D., NRLC president, pointed out that, "The proposal seeks to make every obstetrician/gynecologist in the country an abortionist in the mold of Surgeon General nominee Henry Foster. It is ironic that those who want to force medical schools to train abortionists call themselves 'pro-choice'."