

Tough Questions: What's wrong with "health of the mother?"

'Health' as defined in the Supreme Court decision of Doe vs. Bolton (the companion case to Roe vs. Wade), includes "all factors—

- physical,
- emotional,
- psychological,
- familial,
- and the woman's age

—relevant to the well-being of the patient."

If 'health' is not more narrowly defined, it can almost always be argued that any woman unhappy about being pregnant or concerned about future financial cost to her family would have legal cause for an abortion since it is more expensive to **raise** a child than to **abort** one.

Presbyterians Pro-Life holds that all efforts should be made to save the lives of both mother and child and recognizes that in rare cases where it may be possible to save only the mother what is necessary to save her life should be done.

The current Presbyterian Church(USA) policy on abortion allows the church to define "health" using the legal, and broadest, definition of the word. It enables justification of abortion for virtually any reason.

Aside from questions raised by the legal implications of the term "health," does abortion actually safeguard a woman's health as "health" is commonly understood?

If a woman's life or health is endangered by continuing the pregnancy after a baby is viable (has a chance to live if born), then delivery methods that allow for the possibility of live birth are much safer for the mother than are methods that entail taking the life of (aborting) the baby. With modern medicine this is true without exception. There is never a time after viability that it is safer for the mother to abort the baby.

Contrary to previous medical thought, recent studies have shown that the risks of dying in the 1-8 years after pregnancy are higher following induced abortion than after childbirth. This includes the risks of dying from natural causes as well as the risk of death from suicide, homicide, and from accidents. Risks for hospitalization for psychiatric illness and for alcoholism and drug abuse are all higher after abortion.* Abortion does not safeguard a woman's health.

**Studies were controlled to consider status of these factors before pregnancy.*

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