

# News You Didn't Hear From Tom Brokaw, Peter Jennings or Dan Rather About Partial-Birth Abortion, Embryonic Stem Cell Research, and Same-Sex Marriage

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## “Partial Birth” Abortion

The more technical name for the partial-birth abortion is the “D&X,” or “dilate and extract.” It may also be called an “intact D&E,” (dilation and evacuation) or an “Intrauterine Cranial Decompression” procedure. However, by whatever name you call it, here is what happens:

The procedure is usually performed during the fifth month of gestation or later. The woman’s cervix is dilated, and the fetus is partially removed from the womb, feet first. The surgeon inserts a sharp object into the back of the fetus’ head, removes it, and inserts a vacuum tube through which the brains are extracted. The head of the fetus contracts at this point and allows the fetus to be more easily removed from the womb.<sup>1</sup>

## ***How many partial-birth abortions take place each year?***

Ron Fitzsimmons, executive director of the *National Coalition of Abortion Providers* testified in government hearings that only about 450 D&Xs were performed annually in the United States. Later, on *ABC’s Nightline* program [2/26/97], he admitted that he had lied about this figure in order to match the lies and rhetoric by the other side in the debate. He now estimates that **3 to 4 thousand [about 10 per day]** is a more accurate value.<sup>2</sup>

It may surprise you to learn that the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists opposes a ban on the D&X (partial birth abortion), despite the fact that “a select panel convened by ACOG **could identify no circumstances** under which intact D&X would be **the only option to protect the life or health of a woman,**”...

Their reason? That the partial-birth abortion (or “intact D&X”) “**may be** the best or most appropriate procedure in a particular circumstance to **save the life or preserve the health of a woman,** and only the doctor, in consultation with the patient, based upon the woman’s particular circumstances, can make this decision.”<sup>3</sup>

Remember, they came to this conclusion **despite** the fact that they **cannot think of a circumstance** in which it is **needed!** That means that partial-birth abortions are **usually** being performed for convenience or other reasons than saving the life of the mother. This is terrible.

## ***Of the 1.37 Million Legal Abortions Performed Each Year in America<sup>4</sup>, How Many Are Due to Rape, Incest, Fetal or Maternal Health?***

Ah, the war cry of all abortion advocates. Even the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, quoted above, use this as their excuse to opposed a ban on the partial-birth abortion. We

are constantly told that we **must** allow abortion in all its forms and at all stages of pregnancy due to four major factors: the life or health of the mother, the health (or perceived abnormality) of the fetus (baby), and, of course, rape and incest.

But how often does one of these four factors actually figure into the decision to have an abortion?

### **Less than 2% of the 1.37 Million Abortions Per Year are Due to Rape, Incest or Health Reasons**

In a study entitled “Reasons given for having abortions in the United States,”<sup>5</sup> Wm. Robert Johnston includes this chart. (Figures in parentheses are range of values from other studies cited in the article.)

#### **REASONS FOR ABORTIONS: COMPILED ESTIMATES**

**Rape— 0.25 % (0.1-1 %)**

**Incest— 0.03 % (<0.1 %)**

**Physical *life* of mother— 0.2 % (0.1-0.3 %)**

**Physical *health* of mother—1.0 % (0.1-3 %)**

**Fetal health—0.4 % (0.1-1.0 %)**

Mental health of mother—depends on criterion (0.1-17 %)

**“Personal choice”—98% (78-99 %)**

—Too young/immature/not ready for responsibility—(32 %)

—Economic—(21-28 %)

—To avoid adjusting life—(16 %)

—Mother single or in poor relationship—(12-13 %)

—Enough children already—(4-8 %)

Quantifying cases involving the “mental health” of the mother is difficult due to the highly subjective use of this term. It is likely that the number of cases involving medically-defined mental illness falls towards the low end of the range given above.

These official state statistics suggest that the commonly cited AGI [Alan Guttmacher Institute (the research branch of Planned Parenthood)] figures for the “hard cases” are high, perhaps by a factor of two. In any case, however, there appears to be consensus that the hard cases—rape, incest, life/health of mother or baby—are a very small fraction of cases. ... In contrast, AGI’s 1988 survey... suggests that **a significant fraction of abortions** are done by mothers who are not unable to care for a child, but simply **do not want their lives inconvenienced**....<sup>6</sup>

Did you catch that? **Less than 2 percent of the 1.37 million or so abortions** each year have anything at all to do with health issues, or with pregnancies due to rape or incest, those so-called “hard cases”! That means that **there is no “moral” justification for the other 98 percent**.

### **Embryonic Stem Cell Research vs. Adult Stem Cell Research**

Most discussions of stem cell research unjustifiably hold out hope that by creating human embryos (the point where all life begins) that if we harvest the stem cells from these humans, thereby destroying them, it is worthwhile to do so, as these cells will cure a multitude of diseases in people.

This is morally wrong—you don’t kill your son to help your mother. And, in fact, the scientific evidence to prove this point does not support the unrealistic expectations for cures.

## ***Do Embryonic Stem Cells Hold the Best Hope for Michael J. Fox or the Disabled Such as the Late Christopher Reeve?***

The media feeding frenzy regarding embryonic stem cell research has begun to heat up again in recent days. Dr. Adrienne Torda, senior lecturer in medical ethics at the University of New South Wales, Australia, explains:

The death of Christopher Reeve has thrust the issue of stem-cell research into the limelight. Best known as a strong and fearless fighter, both on the big screen, and in real life after his tragic accident which left him severely disabled, his tireless and articulate appeal for support for **embryonic stem cell research** did an immeasurable amount to raise awareness about this field of research.

Figures such as Reeve, Michael J. Fox or Ronald Reagan have been used in the campaign for stem-cell research, raising public optimism of the many diseases and disabilities that could be helped by research in this field.

But as Hollywood seemed to take control of the issue, it was easy to gain the impression that within just a few years **[embryonic] stem-cell** technology would allow the disabled to **get up out of their wheelchairs and walk again**, with many diseases also soon to be cured.

Any publicity might be good publicity, but **these extraordinarily high expectations** of quick clinical results **are unsustainable**, and unsupportable, since **any realistic therapeutic advance is decades away**.<sup>7</sup>

Other experts agree on this last point:

Princeton University Professor Robert P. George says, “No one knows when—or even whether or not—**human embryonic stem cells will be therapeutically useful in treating any major disease or injury**.”<sup>8</sup>

Maureen L. Condic, Assistant Professor of Neurobiology and Anatomy at the University of Utah, is working on the regeneration of adult and embryonic neurons following spinal cord injury. She says, “To date **there is no evidence that cells generated from embryonic stem cells can be safely transplanted back into adult animals to restore the function of damaged or diseased adult tissues**.”<sup>9</sup>

### ***Adult Stem Cells vs. Embryonic Stem Cells***

There seems to be some confusion even among reporters as to what constitutes adult as opposed to embryonic stem cells.

Embryonic stem cells come from human embryos (these may be the so-called “left over” embryos from in vitro fertilization, or those created through some form of cloning—using cells from an adult to fertilize the egg). In either case, the embryo is destroyed so the stem cells can be “harvested” some time in the first 5-10 days of life.

We have elsewhere argued extensively that this embryo is a unique human being<sup>10</sup>, and to destroy it is to end a life. Clarke Forsythe, Director of the Americans United for Life Project in Law and Bioethics gives support for this same point:

William Larsen in his 1993 text, *Human Embryology*, states: “the nuclei of the male and female gametes unite, resulting in the formation of a zygote containing a single diploid [having the full complement of chromosomes] nucleus. Embryonic development is considered to begin at this point.” Larsen also states that “the moment of zygote formation may be taken as the beginning or zero time point of embryonic development.”...

O’Rahilly & Muller in their 1994 text, *Human Embryology & Teratology*, state... “[a]lthough life is a continuous process, fertilization is a critical landmark because, under ordinary circumstances, a new, genetically distinct human organism is thereby formed.”<sup>11</sup>

We are opposed to the use of **embryonic stem cells in research or in treatment**, because there is no way they can be harvested other than by killing the “donor.”

On the other hand, so-called “adult” stem cells can be harvested with no threat to life at all. Sources include: umbilical cord blood, the placenta, tissues such as bone marrow, lung, pancreas, brain, breast, fat, skin and even tooth pulp. The Christian Medical and Dental Association remarks, “Bone marrow stem cells have been recognized and used in treatment for over 20 years. Only recently were stem cells found in many other tissues. There may be stem cells in each of the 210 different types of tissue in the human body.”<sup>12</sup>

Wolfgang Lillge, M.D., writes:

It has been known for about 30 years that stem cells are present in the tissue of the adult, but it was assumed that they could only form cells of a particular tissue. That is, reprogramming them was considered impossible. In recent years, however, pluripotent stem cells were discovered in various human tissues—in the spinal cord, in the brain, in the mesenchyme (connective tissue) of various organs, and in the blood of the umbilical cord. These pluripotent stem cells are capable of forming several cell types—principally blood, muscle, and nerve cells. It has been possible to recognize, select, and develop them to the point that they form mature cell types with the help of growth factors and regulating proteins.

This shows that in tissues of the body, adult stem cells possess a much greater potential for differentiation than previously assumed. This knowledge must be brought into the public consciousness with all possible emphasis.

If stem cell research were really only meant for therapeutic uses, which it most obviously should be, adult stem cells would promise a very productive research field—and beyond that, a possibility, without moral objection, to discover fundamentals of the dynamics of tissue differentiation.<sup>13</sup>

### ***Hope is in Adult Stem Cell Research***

However, news about the very significant advances in the use of **adult stem cells** is sadly missing from most media reports on stem cell research. Wesley J. Smith lists some of the things you probably did not see on the nightly news in his article, “Spinning Stem Cells”:

It’s worth recapping just a few of the other advances made in adult-cell therapies and research in the last two years, all of which were significantly underplayed in the media:

- Israeli doctors inserted a paraplegic patient’s own white blood cells into her severed spinal cord, after which she regained bladder control and the ability to wiggle her toes and move her legs. (I only saw reporting on this case in the *Globe and Mail*, June 15, 2001.)
- Immune systems destroyed by cancer were restored in children using stem cells from umbilical-cord blood. (There was a good story in the April 16, 2001 *Time*, but other than that I saw no reporting.)
- At Harvard University, mice with Type I diabetes were completely cured of their disease. The experiment was so successful that human trials are now planned. (This was reported in the July 19, 2001, *Harvard University Gazette*, but I saw no coverage at all in the mainstream press.)
- Diabetic mice treated with adult stem cells achieved full insulin production and all

lived. This is in contrast to an experiment in which embryonic stem cells injected into diabetic mice achieved a 3 percent insulin production rate and all the mice died. (According to the May 2001 *STATS*, published by the Statistical Assessment Service, the embryo experiment made big news while the media ignored the adult cell experiment.)

- How many humans have been treated by embryonic stem cells? Zero. Indeed, before human trials can even be safely undertaken researchers will have to overcome two serious difficulties that stand between patients and embryonic-cell regenerative medicine: 1) ES cells cause tumors, and 2) ES cells may be rejected by the immune system. Surmounting these difficulties — if they can be surmounted at all — will take a very long time and much expense. There is no risk of rejection with adult cells, by contrast, because they come from the patients' own bodies. Nor, at least so far, does adult-stem-cell therapy appear to cause tumors. This puts adult therapies years ahead of the game.

Smith continues:

The media continue to imply that embryos hold the key to the future. But increasingly, it looks as if **our own body cells offer the quickest and best hope for regenerative medicine**. The time has come for the public to insist that the media stop acting as if adult stem cells are the “wrong” kind of stem cells, and report to the American people fully and fairly the remarkable advances continually being made in adult regenerative medicine.<sup>14</sup>

## Same-Sex Marriage

In his book *Marriage on Trial*, Glenn Stanton, Senior Analyst for Marriage and Sexuality at Focus on the Family, explains why the fight to preserve the traditional definition of marriage is so important. He says:

By Legalizing Same-Sex Marriage, We Lose...

**1. the unique value of male and female...** [one or the other is] not necessary for the family, ... kids don't need mothers or fathers...

**2. the special value of your marriage...** A natural marriage includes the wonder of a relationship where you are creating and bearing new life together and raising that new life to full and healthy human maturity.... Same-sex marriage changes all this and says ...it is mere personal preference...

**3. the necessary social value of monogamy...** Monogamy, research and experience tells us, is virtually impossible in male homosexual relationships.... same-sex marriage will very likely encourage society to see monogamy as optional.

**4. the dignity and status of women...** If two married men are morally equal to a married man and a woman, then the social value of a husband... is lost as a social ideal. More women will be left to fend for themselves... Research by Scott Coltrane shows us that societies with lower rates of father involvement in the lives of their children have lower respect and provide less significant social opportunity for women....

**5. the well-being and safety of children...** Children are put at serious risk of physical and sexual abuse when they live in a family with a nonbiological parent. Therefore, all same-sex parenting potentially puts children at serious risk....

**6. the right to religious conviction and democracy...** When it is established that gay marriage is a “fundamental human right,” it is reasonable that it will be taught as normal in every public school... Churches could be pressured to perform same-sex weddings... Your

right to oppose homosexuality or oppose it being taught... could be lost. It could become hate speech to say children need a mother and father. [That is exactly what happened in Canada.]...

**7. the mechanism that delivers the next healthy, productive, safe generation...** When there is no special value to (1) males and females permanently committed to, sacrificing for and completing each other, and (2) biological, pro-creative childbearing and rearing, then we erase the mechanism that has allowed all civilizations to bring forth the next healthy, socially productive, compassionate and considerate generation.<sup>15</sup>

### ***Traditional Marriage is Important for Children***

Glenn Stanton and co-author Dr. Bill Maier list a number of reasons traditional heterosexual marriage is beneficial for both parents and children. They say:

Healthy marriage provides rich benefits for... children by way of *increasing*

- all levels of intellectual and educational development
- all levels of physical and emotional health
- increased sympathy and consideration for others

*decreasing*

- the need to visit doctors for physical and emotional problems
- incidents of idleness (being out of school and not working)
- being in trouble at school or with the law
- participation in drugs, violence and premarital sexuality and childbearing
- the danger of physical and sexual violence
- the likelihood of living in poverty<sup>16</sup>

Finally, Stanton and Maier list these reason children benefit from living in a traditional family, where both mother and father are present in the home:

- Mothers and fathers parent differently
- Mothers and fathers play differently
- Fathers push limits, mothers stress safety
- Mothers and fathers communicate differently
- Mothers and fathers discipline differently
- Mothers and fathers help children prepare for life and the world differently
- Mothers and fathers provide a unique look at the world of women and men
- Fathers teach respect for women, and mothers and fathers teach respect for relationship.<sup>17</sup>

### ***Why Should Americans Fight for Traditional Marriage?***

In another article Glenn Stanton explains why we must continue to fight for traditional marriage. He says, "If we are to concern ourselves with the welfare of children, we have to be concerned with the health of marriage in our culture. For, as marriage goes, so go our children – and with them – the future of humanity."<sup>18</sup>

### ***But Isn't Same-Sex Marriage a Civil Right?***

Gay activists claim that the right to same-sex marriage is right up there with the rights of blacks

to be treated equal, the right of women to vote, etc.<sup>19</sup>

But many of those involved in the Civil Rights movement, disagree. In fact, they are offended by the comparison. Correspondent Steve Jordahl filed an article entitled “Gay ‘Marriage’ Not a Civil Right” for Family News in Focus. He reports one black activist’s reaction:

...Dr. Walter Fauntroy takes issue with the gay activist claim. Fauntroy, who coordinated the historic civil rights March on Washington in 1963, said he will never accept the civil rights comparison, especially in a culture where the family structure is already decimated.

“What happens in my heart is that I know the difference,” he said. “Don’t confuse my people, who have been the victims of deliberate family destruction, by giving them another definition of marriage.”

He adamantly supports equal rights for all people in the areas of income, education, health care, housing and criminal justice, but he said there are two essential components gay “marriages” would never be able to provide. First, gay couples can’t—by themselves—procreate.

“Nor can (homosexual couples) effectively prepare the next generation for civil society,” Fauntroy said. “Every boy needs a loving relationship with a man and a woman.”

Seventy percent of African-American children, he added, are being raised by single parent families.<sup>20</sup>

Jeff Jacoby of the *Boston Globe* puts it even more bluntly:

Last month, as Massachusetts lawmakers prepared to debate a constitutional amendment on the meaning of marriage, the state’s leading black clergy came out strongly in support of the age-old definition: the union of a man and a woman. They were promptly tarred as enemies of civil rights. “Martin Luther King,” one left-wing legislator barked, “is rolling over in his grave at a statement like this.”

But if anything has King spinning in his grave, it is the indecency of exploiting his name for a cause he never supported. The civil rights movement for which he lived and died was grounded in a fundamental truth: All God’s children are created equal. The same-sex marriage movement, by contrast, is grounded in the *denial* of a fundamental truth: The Creator who made us equal made us male and female. That duality has always and everywhere been the starting point for marriage. To claim that marriage can ignore that duality is akin to the claim, back when lunch counters were segregated, that America was a land of liberty and justice for all.<sup>21</sup>

## Notes

1 “D & X/ PBA Procedures, : religious tolerance.org, [http://www.religioustolerance.org/abo\\_pba1.htm](http://www.religioustolerance.org/abo_pba1.htm)

2 *ibid.*, emphasis added.

3 [http://www.acog.org/from\\_home/publications/press\\_releases/nr02-13-02.cfm](http://www.acog.org/from_home/publications/press_releases/nr02-13-02.cfm), emphasis added.

4 <http://womensissues.about.com/cs/abortionstats/a/aaabortionstats.htm>

5 Wm. Robert Johnson, “Reasons given for having abortions in the United States,” <http://www.johnstonsarchive.net/policy/abortion/abreasons.html>

6 *ibid.*

7 Adrienne Torda, “Stem-cell hard sell gets ahead of itself,” <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2004/10/14/1097607366204.html?oneclick=true>, emphasis added.

8 WorldNetDaily, quoted at <http://www.cmdahome.org/>, bold emphasis added.

9 <http://www.firstthings.com/ftissues/ft0201/articles/condic.html>, bold emphasis added.

10 See, for example, John Ankerberg, John Weldon, *When Does Life Begin?* (Brentwood, TN: Wolgemuth & Hyatt, 1989).

11 Clarke Forsythe, “Just the Facts, Ma’am,” *AOL Notes*, Fall 2004, vol. 34, no. 2, p. 5.

12 <http://www.cmdahome.org/index.cgi?BISKIT=2454529417&CONTEXT=art&art=1655>

13 Wolfgang Lillge, M. D., “The Case for Adult Stem Cell Research,” [http://www.21stcenturysciencetech.com/articles/wolfgang\\_lillge.html](http://www.21stcenturysciencetech.com/articles/wolfgang_lillge.html)  
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14 Wesley J. Smith, “Spinning Stem Cells,” *National Review Online*, <http://www.nationalreview.com/comment/comment->