

Evolution of My Views on Abortion

Category: Abortion: Then and Now

written by Colette Charles | July 20, 2022

There was a time when I viewed abortion as permissible only in very specific situations. That was the view I held during my years of medical school.

Then came residency training. Our program had a clinic where we offered abortions. I was not mandated to perform the procedure, but I was expected to become competent in educating my patients, if needed, regarding abortions and provide them with resources for whatever their decision may be. I was not prepared for how conflicted I would feel about doing this.

My first "options talk," where a pregnant patient comes in to discuss her options, brought up many confusing feelings. The young college couple expressed confidence that this was the wrong time for a baby, and they were already aware of the options. We scheduled her for an abortion and discussed contraception going forward. I respected her decision, but I also felt extremely guilty. I called my mom for reassurance that my facilitation of this abortion was not going to damn me to hell.

It wasn't long, however, before these talks became second nature. I began to realize that it all came down to helping my patients do what was best for them.

Other pivotal experiences occurred during my gynecology rotation, where I spent one day per week at an abortion clinic. I'll never forget how my anxiety heightened each time I drove past the pro-life protestors outside the clinic. It was painful to imagine what our patients must endure before they even step inside.

And then, there was the heart-wrenching case of an abortion that was not possible.

Ellie walked in with a protruding abdomen. Even the untrained eye could decipher she was way beyond the maximum gestational age allowed at the clinic. We performed her dating ultrasound and informed her of what was obvious to us all.

Her wail still echoes in my head when I think about that day. I could not help but tear up as I observed from the sidelines. We provided her with resources for an out-of-state clinic that could help her; that is, if she could gather the finances and get to them in time. I could only imagine what Ellie had been through up until that point or what she was about to face. I left amazed that the most impressionable encounter was with the patient I could not help. I became pro-choice that day.

Abortion is a complex issue. It's not easy for a woman to choose to terminate her pregnancy. But that's the game changer, the *life changer* in so many ways. Choice.

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