

Three Fallacies and One Card

Category: Abortion: Then and Now

written by Pamela Adelstein | July 9, 2022

Before I decided to apply to medical school, my father said, "Pam, you should become a doctor. You'll have a lifelong skill, help people, and be your own boss. Hang out your shingle, and then you're in business." I nodded, trying to envision the words on my potential shingle.

At a medical school lecture an elderly male ob-gyn declared, "Abortion must always be legal because no contraception is 100% effective, and there will always thus be unintended pregnancies." I wanted to give him a standing ovation and hug him – for seeing and hearing women and those who care about women.

As a pregnant attending, on the afternoon of September 11, 2001, I attended a birth and "caught" the baby. I phrase it that way because I didn't deliver the baby. The pregnant woman did all the work. I will never forget the new father's words. "America is such a beautiful country. Why would anyone want to hurt it?" The mother and father had recently emigrated from a nation that persecuted its citizens. It was an honor for me to behold his gratitude and humility.

In hindsight, I consider these three fallacies, unbeknownst to their speakers.

Dad: I have chosen to work for a community health center, rather than in my own private practice. I have a boss who pays my salary. I am also not the boss of my medical decision making. My options for caring for pregnant people are dictated by politicians interested in their own power, not the well-being of people and families.

Ob-gyn lecturer: You busted my unfair stereotype of you as a white elderly male with your insistence that abortion be a health care right. Tragically, your view is now anachronistic, as Roe has been overturned.

New Father: The beauty of America has been tarnished by lawmakers who seek to repeal human rights, who waste careers and countless dollars hurting, rather than helping, inhabitants of this nation.

I console myself with a treasured memory: I had the privilege of providing medical abortions as they became legal, at a different practice, years ago. On Abortion Provider Appreciation Day, I received a card thanking me for my work. My heart swelled because . . . I WAS the boss of my patient-centered medical care. I increased legal abortion access. And, in doing so, I helped secure the well-being of people in this potentially beautiful country.

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