

Good morning ladies and gentleman.

I am Mary Kay Brown, RN, BSN, CCRN, Senior Professional Staff Nurse at the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center, Presbyterian Hospital. I have practiced as a Registered Nurse in the state of Pennsylvania for 24 years. I have been a Clinical Nursing Instructor for the Community College of Allegheny County for the last 4 years.

I have been actively involved in the Pro-life movement since the birth of my daughter, Megan 17 years ago. It has been both my experiences as a single mother and the patients that I have cared for as a Registered Nurse that have shaped my opinions regarding safe patient care for both mother and child. When I attended The University of Pittsburgh in the early 1980's, I was taught that when caring for a pregnant woman, that you are actually caring for two patients. This has been evidenced many times throughout my career. Many treatments, including

medications, given to the pregnant patient, must consider the effect of these treatments to her unborn child.

Upon graduation from the University of Pittsburgh in 1984 we recited the Florence Nightingale Pledge. Florence understood, even in her time, that nursing is a calling. I entered the profession as a ministry to serving God's people. Almost every nurse I talk with recalls entering nursing to serve and care for others.

Florence Nightingale Pledge.

"I solemnly pledge myself before God and in the presence of this assembly, to pass my life in purity and to practice my profession faithfully. I will abstain from whatever is deleterious and mischievous, and will not take or knowingly administer any harmful drug.

I will do all in my power to make and maintain the highest standards and practices of my profession.

I will hold in confidence all personal matters committed to my keeping in the practice of my calling. I will assist the physician in his work and will devote myself to the welfare of my patients, my family, and my community.

I will endeavor to fulfill my rights and privileges as a good citizen and take my share of responsibility in promoting the health and welfare of the community.

I will constantly endeavor to increase my knowledge and skills in nursing and to use them wisely. I will zealously seek to nurse those who are ill wherever they may be and whenever they are in need.

I will be active in assisting others in safeguarding and promoting the health and happiness of mankind."

The Hippocratic Oath that most physicians recite also address treatment given to a woman that would be deleterious to her child.

It reads in part " I will follow that method of treatment which, according to my ability and judgment, I consider for the benefit of my patients, and abstain from whatever is deleterious and mischievous. I will give no deadly medicine to any one if asked nor suggest any such counsel; furthermore, I will not give to a woman an instrument to produce abortion."

This was written by Hippocrates five centuries before the birth of Christ. It was understood even then that abortion and euthanasia are an ever present danger in the healthcare professions. As technology continues to advance, more "treatments" are available that are dangerous to both mothers and their children.

As a nurse for 24 years, I have strived to care for and comfort my patients and their families.

As health care workers we are not only confronted with the obvious attacks on human life at both ends of the life cycle, including both abortion and euthanasia. We are now confronted with the destruction of human life at its earliest stages from hormonal birth control, "emergency contraception", and embryonic stem cell research.

As described in the inserts accompanying birth control pills, one method they use to "prevent pregnancy" is to prevent the implantation of an embryo into the uterine wall. This actually results in the death of a tiny, several day old, human being.

"Emergency contraception" which is a large dose of hormonal birth control, works by the same mechanism. Embryonic stem cell research also results in the death of a human embryo each time an attempt is made to "match" stem cells to the recipient.

It is absolutely imperative that as health care workers we retain our ability not to participate in ANY activity that we feel is immoral or have been taught by our individual faiths to be immoral. I have been raised as a Catholic. I have been taught that life begins at conception and ends with natural death. It is amazing how science echoes these definitions of the beginning and end of life.

When we do anything to interrupt the continuation of human life we offend the sensibilities of conscientious health care workers.

When we, as health care workers, speak out about these assaults on human life. We MUST be protected from retaliation, in any form.

Whether it comes in obvious ways such as termination, demotion, transfer, or denial of promotion, or whether it appears in more subtle ways such as change in shifts, assignments or change in benefits.

Retaliation comes, not only when we refuse to participate in activities that end a human life, but when we give the patient all the information related to giving an informed consent. We need protection when we inform patients of the risk of breast cancer from hormonal birth control, emergency contraception and abortion. (All of which are well documented in peer reviewed medical journals.) In my extensive experience most patients are not fully informed of risks to themselves associated with the above treatments.

When having an abortion explained to them most women are outright lied to about the development of their unborn child. They are told it is a "blob of tissue." This goes completely against readily available medical evidence.

When speaking with patients I frequently have to explain the risks associated with these treatments, how the treatments work, and alternatives available, including help available to expectant

mothers. This is generally accepted practice for informed consent, but frequently omitted when consenting procedures that are "political."

I personally cared for a 10 year old who was 32 weeks pregnant. The social worker was attempting to talk the young girl into going out of state for a late term abortion. It was never explained to this girl or her mother the dangers involved. Never was it mentioned that it was more dangerous for her to abort her baby than to carry to baby to term.

Rather than it being unusual for me to have to offer additional information and resources for informed consent. In my practice it has been the norm. Luckily I have had very few instances where I felt threatened in my position for having to speak out. But, the fear is always there, especially for a single mother, who must be able to support her child. There are always subtle threats by peers and supervisory personnel "not to rock the boat."

Health care workers as individuals need to feel safe in standing up for their beliefs and religious practices. Health care institutions needs to be protected when they stand up and protect human life, when they will not provide or refer for deadly procedures.

Pharmacists must be able to remain in their positions even if they will not dispense drugs that harm both mother and child. If healthcare workers of conscience are forced out of their positions, who will stand up to protect the patients from dangerous drugs and procedures?

You will hear that if health care workers are permitted to refuse to participate in deadly procedures then patients will be denied their right to health care. Nothing could be further from the truth.

There are many practitioners and institutions willing and able to provide these services. What is a greater threat to these patients is if these practitioners and institutions quit providing all services rather than be forced to participate in services that they find

morally offensive. I, for one, and I believe many others would chose not to practice our chosen professions rather than be subjected to participate in morally offensive practices. Religious institutions would close their doors rather than provide go against the doctrines of their faith. Considering the current general nursing crisis and shortage of internal medicine and family practice physicians in rural areas it does not make sense to risk further shortages of these professionals.

I believe it to be absolutely imperative to health care in the State of Pennsylvania for health care practitioners and institutions to be able to provide appropriate care to their patients, all of their patients. For this to occur it is imperative that health care workers be able to practice within the confines of their conscience. I support the passage of Pennsylvania Senate Bill No. 1255.

Thank you.