



Dispelling the Myth: Fetal Tissue Research and Planned Parenthood

by Rev. Mark R Pawlowski

It's a little known fact – and a discomfoting thought for those who have chosen to vilify Planned Parenthood because of recent “sting” videos – that fetal tissue research in the U.S. began before abortion was legal. As is the case presently, so too then, fetal tissue donations came from universities and hospitals

That research was conducted 60 years ago with great respect and ethical sensitivity seems to be ignored, as well as the results which brought significant breakthroughs and major discoveries in the eradication of human diseases. To date, here is a partial list: vaccines against chickenpox, rubella/measles, shingles, rabies and hepatitis A.

It's also a little known fact that the polio vaccine was developed from fetal kidney cells – an achievement for which the 1954 Nobel Prize for Medicine was awarded.

As U.S. News and World Report noted in August (2015), “Scientists use fetal tissue to study how the human body develops, to better understand and solve developmental abnormalities such as Down syndrome or malformation of organs, the causes of miscarriages or sudden infant death syndrome. Fetal tissue research has helped medical providers diagnose genetic diseases before birth.”

In 2013 the National Institutes of Health spent \$76 million on fetal tissue research.

It can be argued and lamented that such significant and sensitive research continued throughout the years without proper interpretation and rationale by the medical and scientific communities to the larger society. Be that as it may, in 1993 the Office for Human Research

Protections promulgated Public Law 103-43 which established the ethical procedures for fetal tissue research that continue to this day.

In defense of several (out of 600) of its health centers donating (not selling) fetal tissue, Planned Parenthood in part referenced the history of ethical and medical protocols and procedures it follows – the very same procedures that are identical to programs at hospitals and universities across the country.

The genesis of outrage initially against Planned Parenthood (the organization anti-abortion people love to hate) began with the release of eight videos alleging wrongdoing, i.e. selling fetal tissue for profit. It is significant to note the organization that created the tapes is a group called the Center for Medical Progress (CMP). Its leadership is documented as being connected to bombings of women's health centers as well as the murder of an abortion provider.

The video excerpts themselves, while perpetuating a myth of wrongdoing by Planned Parenthood, are problematic to say the least since they provide no context for CMP's allegations. The tapes spurred investigations into Planned Parenthood – in all five states no wrongdoing was found. Not helping their cause was the fact the videos contained at least 42 splices that portrayed seamless conversations and statements that changed the meaning of what was said to reinforce the false claims being made.

Finally, Planned Parenthood in a press release stated "that the secretly recorded videos were heavily edited and 'significantly distort and misrepresent' actual events." Three teams of experts, including a video science instructor at the FBI National Academy, noted that supposed "full footage" that the group (CMP) has released is edited, inaccurate, and unreliable, as are transcripts that the group has produced. The experts noted that "no unedited source footage has been released."



Planned Parenthood, for its part, acknowledged that several of its health centers participated in accordance with all ethical and procedural mandates in fetal tissue donation programs.

This brief overview of the facts and history of fetal tissue research, coupled with the recent attacks on Planned Parenthood, plainly reveals the reality of the anti-abortion movement's extreme motives. Those motives either deny or are unaware of the very reality of the life-saving medicines and scientific discoveries already discovered, and threaten those yet to come by the elimination of fetal tissue research.

For further reading:

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/the-long-successful-history-of-using-fetal-tissue-in-research_55b90da7e4b0224d8834d503

<http://www.ascb.org/newsfiles/fetaltissue.pdf>

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK231997/>

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4172669/>

<https://istandwithpp.org/files/9414/4068/4146/8-27-15-Analysis-Center-for-Medical-Progress-Videos-Forensic-Report.pdf>

(<https://www.plannedparenthood.org/about-us/newsroom/press-releases/planned-parenthood-calls-on-anti-abortion-activists-to-release-all-video-footage-to-authorities-immediately>)

<http://mediamatters.org/research/2015/07/21/the-extreme-and-violent-background-of-the-group/204519>

<https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2015/08/31/group-attacking-planned-parenthood-linked-extremists>