

## Abortion Linked to Higher Rates of Child Abuse, Study Finds

Authors concluded no longer can be any doubt that abortion significantly impacts health of women and their families

SPRINGFIELD, IL, March 13, 2007 (LifeSiteNews.com) - A history of abortion is associated with more frequent acts of physical aggression toward subsequent children, according to a new study published in the Internet Journal of Pediatrics and Neonatology.

The findings were drawn from an analysis of data on 237 low-income women in Baltimore who had physically mistreated or neglected at least one of their children or allowed someone else to do so. Researchers controlled for a history of miscarriage or stillbirth, as well as for family history, aggression by the woman's partner and other key factors. While all the women in the study had some connection with child maltreatment or neglect, the authors found that those who reported a history of abortion reported significantly more frequent acts of physical violence, such as slapping, hitting or beating, directed at their children.

Priscilla Coleman, a professor of human development and family studies at Bowling Green State University and lead author of the study, suggested that the link between abortion and child abuse may be influenced by a number of key factors, including unresolved grief, having felt pressured into an unwanted abortion, and disruption in maternal bonding with subsequently born children.

Unresolved grief issues, Coleman noted, "may negatively impact parental responsiveness to child needs, trigger anger, which is a common component of grief, and/or increase parental anxiety regarding child well-being." Some research indicates that grief may be more difficult to resolve if women undergo an unwanted abortion due to pressure from others. In one study, cited by Coleman, 64 percent of American women with a history of abortion reported feeling pressured to abort by others.

Dr. David Reardon, director of the Elliot Institute and a leading researcher who has been involved in more than a dozen studies on the impact of abortion on women, said that this latest study confirms the general findings of previous studies linking abortion with a higher risk of abuse or neglect.

"Previous research has also shown that abortion is linked with a subsequent increased risk of alcoholism, drug use, anxiety, rage, anger and psychiatric hospitalization," Reardon said. "Any of these factors, individually or in combination, can significantly increase the personal and family stresses that can lead to maltreatment or neglect."

A previous study by Coleman found that a maternal history of abortion was linked to less supportive home environments for subsequently born children and that subsequent children exhibited more behavioral problems than the children of women without a history of abortion.

A New Zealand study that tracked young women from birth to 25 years of age found that young women who had abortions were significantly more likely to experience subsequent depression, suicidal behavior and substance abuse, even after the researchers controlled for previous mental

health problems.

"Taken all together, these studies show that the mental health effects of abortion don't stop with women," Reardon said. "They will impact their families, too."

Coleman's team suggested that professionals should be aware of the links between abortion and maternal mental health problems and "sensitively inquire about any history of abortion and related, unresolved negative emotions when working with women engaged in or at risk for aberrant parenting."

Finally, the authors concluded that while additional research is always needed, there can no longer be any doubt that abortion significantly impacts the health of women and their families.

"For years, abortion was construed to be a benign medical procedure carrying little if any potential for lasting adverse effects," they wrote. "However ... the last several years have brought greater understanding that abortion for many women is an issue with profound physical, psychological, spiritual and lifestyle dimensions that are intimately tied to many aspects of their lives."

Sources:

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