

Emergency Care Under Threat

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Since the U.S. Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade*, many doctors, such as myself, have been forced to contend with a maze of legal challenges when caring for our patients. At the time of writing this, 21 states have eliminated all or some abortions – a number that can change at any moment.

Although many of these laws include exceptions under life-threatening circumstances, the vague language within them creates a dangerous climate of uncertainty for both patients and providers. Many doctors now fear severe consequences – such as felony charges or loss of their medical license – simply for providing care.

More than two-thirds of office-based ob-gyns say that the Supreme Court's ruling has worsened their ability to manage pregnancy-related emergencies, according to a Kaiser Family Foundation Survey from earlier this year. The study found that two out of five ob-gyns practicing in states with an abortion ban felt constrained in managing miscarriages and other pregnancy-related emergencies. **The result: an existential threat to pregnant patients across the country.**

EMERGENCY MEDICINE

Under the Emergency Medical Treatment and Labor Act, emergency department providers in all 50 states are required to offer stabilizing treatment to patients – including abortion. However, in specific states, like Texas, courts have held that this federal requirement does not supplant newly instated state restrictions that ban abortion. As a result, many emergency medicine doctors are questioning their ability to uphold this core value of their practice.

We now face a significant deterioration of ob-gyn treatment. For example, in the case of ectopic pregnancy – a pregnancy outside of the uterus – the standard life-saving treatment for this medical

emergency is termination of the pregnancy. However, some doctors in states with abortion bans or restrictions are delaying care to patients who are suffering from this often life-threatening condition.

OTHER SPECIALTIES

Across specialties, providers fear practicing medicine without the constitutional protections of *Roe v. Wade*. For instance, many oncologists have been delaying chemotherapy for pregnant patients with cancer because the sicker a patient is, the clearer the law will favor performing standard medical treatment for these patients. This treatment requires providing an abortion, rather than risking the damage caused by cancer medications.

On top of that, forensic nurses who care for sexual assault victims have stated that they will no longer provide the morning-after pill, which could be falsely considered a so-called “abortion drug” in some states.

RESPONDING TO THE CRISIS

The urgent need to protect standard emergency care has deepened my resolve to support Planned Parenthood as a proud member of the President's Circle. Planned Parenthood is responding to the needs of patients and providers across the country by creating innovations in health care delivery, helping patients travel across state lines for care, challenging abortion bans in state courthouses, bolstering the network of abortion providers, and more. Together, we can turn the tide on this ongoing health care crisis.