Women and Abortion: The Psychiatrist's Role

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By Nada Logan Stotland, MD [1]

Former President of the American Psychiatric Association, Nada Stotland, MD, MS, speaks here about abortion—a subject that is especially important for psychiatrists in several ways.

She notes: "As increasingly draconian laws get passed around the country that make it more and more difficult for women to get abortions, often the arguments that are used include allegations that abortions cause mental health conditions. The evidence is very clear: abortion does not cause mental health disorders."

"One-third of women in this country have abortions during their lifetimes: that includes many of our patients. Our patients are particularly vulnerable to unplanned or unwanted pregnancies. They are vulnerable when they are psychotic; when they are depressed; when they are manic; when they have substance abuse problems; when they are victims of violence and sexual abuse. At the same time, they are the least heard—just as poor women are. And many of our patients are poor."

"Women want to have babies when they can take care of them. They don't have abortions because they don't care about babies: they have abortions because they do care. And many of our patients are aware that at a particular time when they are vulnerable is not the best time they can provide the best care for a child."

"Access to this important aspect of women's health care is vital not only to all women around the world, but particularly to our patients."

Dr Stotland is Professor of Psychiatry and Obstetrics and Gynecology at Rush Medical College. She is a former President of the American Psychiatric Association. She is an Editorial Board member of Psychiatric Times.

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