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**JAMA PSYCHIAITRY PUBLISHES FLAWED STUDY BY
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA-SAN FRANCISCO**

“We know that some women do eventually have serious negative psychological responses to their abortions, some within a year or two, but most several years down the road. Women still deserve to have that information when making up their minds about abortion.”

-Randall K. O’Bannon, Ph.D.

National Right to Life Director of Education and Research

WASHINGTON – Researchers at the University of California, San Francisco today published a report in JAMA Psychiatry (“Women’s Mental Health and Well-being 5 Years After Receiving or Being Denied an Abortion”) that supposedly aims to further the myth that women who have an abortion experience little psychological effects. Using data from their “Turnaway Study,” the UCSF authors have attempted to argue that state pro-life informed consent laws are detrimental to women. Now, the same data are being used to argue the non-existence of post-abortion syndrome.

The following analysis of the UCSF report may be attributed to National Right to Life Director of Education and Research Randall K. O’Bannon, Ph.D.

The sort of informed consent or "right to know" laws that the UCSF study purports to address vary from state to state. However, these laws generally have, in addition to basic information on fetal development and practical alternatives and assistance available to pregnant women, some aspect that deals with the potential physical and psychological risks associated with abortion.

The UCSF study supposedly aims to address claims that women choosing to abort may suffer later from depression, anxiety, or other mental health issues.

There is actual ample evidence that this is so, evidenced by reputable studies such as that by Fergusson, et al, "Abortion in young women and subsequent mental health," from the January 2006 issue of the *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*.

Fergusson and his colleagues determined that "Those having an abortion had elevated rates of subsequent mental health problems including depression, anxiety, suicidal behaviours and substance use disorders. This association persisted after adjustment for confounding factors."

The UCSF study appears to conclude something different, saying that being "denied" an abortion may be more detrimental to a woman's mental health than obtaining the abortion.

This appears to be a stretch given their own data. They do show, initially, some greater anxiety one week out among women "denied" abortions than those having abortions. This is an unremarkable finding, since just one week out, these women who had been planning to abort and expecting abortion to provide a resolution to their problems have just found out that the

"solution" they sought will not be forthcoming and that they will have to reset all their plans and expectations accordingly. Frustration and anxiety are not surprising at this point.

Given the circumstances, the remarkable finding is that even at one week after, a number of women had already come to terms with the denial (information from earlier studies using the same Turnaway data). Much of it dissipates with the arrival of the baby.

The authors here admit that once one gets farther out from the initial abortion "denial," even with their data, depression, anxiety, satisfaction levels are all relatively the same.

There are some legitimate scientific questions about whether their Turnaway sample giving birth was sufficiently similar (in age, race, education, employment, marriage, previous births, previous depression, anxiety, drug use) to the other groups to provide a fair comparison, but the biggest issue is that even at five years, the final and complete psychological consequences may not be yet apparent.

We know, anecdotally, from both women who have had abortions and professionals who have counseled those women, that reactions may not present until ten years or more later, perhaps once the woman has gotten married and is either contemplating having a child or has just given birth to a child.

The relevance here, though, is not whether this happens or will eventually happen to every woman who aborts, but that it is a serious and agonizing consequence that we know, from experience does occur with some aborting women. Women considering abortion need to be aware that this is a real and painful reaction some women do indeed have.

The authors admit that "each woman's experience is unique and that women will vary in their responses to having an abortion or being denied an abortion..."

We know that some women do eventually have serious negative psychological responses to their abortions, some within a year or two, but most several years down the road. Women still deserve to have that information when making up their minds about abortion.

That's the basis of the laws and our support for them.

If the UCSF authors truly believe that "[w]omen considering abortion are best served by being provided with the most accurate, scientific information available to help them make their pregnancy decisions," full and complete a disclosure would seem to require telling women of these very real and serious reactions too.

Founded in 1968, the National Right to Life Committee (NRLC), the federation of 50 state right-to-life affiliates and more than 3,000 local chapters, is the nation's oldest and largest grassroots pro-life organization. Recognized as the flagship of the pro-life movement, NRLC works through legislation and education to protect innocent human life from abortion, infanticide, assisted suicide and euthanasia.

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