



THE NATIONAL CATHOLIC BIOETHICS CENTER

6399 Drexel Road, Philadelphia, PA 19151 ▪ Tel 215-877-2660 ▪ Fax 215-877-2688 ▪ www.ncbcenter.org

Bioethics Public Policy Report September 15, 2018

National

- *Skyrocketing suicide rates in transgender teens:* According to a new study published in the journal *Pediatrics*, adolescents who claim to be transgender are attempting suicide at alarming rates. The study, "[Transgender Adolescent Suicide Behavior](#)," reports that 51 percent of teen females "transitioning" to male have attempted suicide. In addition, 42 percent of "gender-nonconforming" (neither exclusively male or female) teens have attempted suicide, and 30 percent of teen males "transitioning" to female have attempted suicide. These findings were based on survey responses from 120,617 adolescents ages 11 to 19, and the data was collected from June 2012 to May 2015. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that suicide is the second-leading cause of death among people ages 10–34 in the US.
- *Planned Parenthood names new president:* Planned Parenthood has named Dr. [Leana Wen](#), a former Commissioner of Health for the city of Baltimore, as its president. In a video posted on the organization's website, Wen stated: "Reproductive health care is health care. Women's health care is health care, and health care has to be understood as a fundamental human right." She continued, "Having a physician as the head of Planned Parenthood, it is a sign that what we are doing is mainstream medical care." Catherine Glenn Foster, President and CEO of Americans United for Life, responded to the announcement by stating that Wen had an "abysmal and tragic record" of combating sexually transmitted diseases during her time in Baltimore Health Commissioner, and has consistently attacked conscience rights. Wen also used her position to sue the Trump administration over funding cuts for teen-pregnancy prevention programs (programs that have been found to be largely unsuccessful). Abby Johnson, a former Planned Parenthood clinic director who has become an outspoken pro-life activist, said she hopes one day to welcome Wen into her ministry for former abortion-industry workers: "Doctors take an oath to first 'do no harm,' and when it comes to pregnant women, there are two patients. Doctors understand this, even those who do abortions."
- *More challenges for CRISPR?* New research indicates that CRISPR may not be able to access certain DNA segments as easily as first thought. [StatNews](#) reports that the strategy hedgehogs use to protect themselves from danger—rolling up in a ball—is similar to what DNA strands do. When a DNA segment wraps itself around a protein into what's called a nucleosome, the CRISPR mechanism cannot access it. The DNA segment is thus "protected" from CRISPR editing.

Federal Courts

- *Appeals court upholds abortion restrictions:* The [8th Circuit Court of Appeals](#) has ruled that Missouri can enforce a law that places restrictions on abortion providers. Specifically, the mandates that abortion providers must meet the same requirements placed on ambulatory surgical center, and it requires doctors performing abortions to obtain admitting privileges at local hospitals. Interestingly, the Supreme Court struck down a similar law from Texas in 2014.
- *Judge blocks fetal remains law:* US District Judge David Ezra has [blocked](#) a Texas law requiring abortion providers and medical facilities to bury or cremate

fetal remains. Ezra ruled that the law violates the due process and equal protection clauses of the 14th Amendment and added that it causes “significant, if not catastrophic, disruptions to the health care system.” Texas State Attorney General Ken Paxton said he was disappointed with the decision, but insisted that his office would defend any law that “requires the dignified treatment of fetal remains, rather than allow health care facilities to dispose of [them] in sewers or landfills.” Amy Hagstrom Miller, the president and CEO of Whole Woman’s Health, hailed Ezra’s decision stating that “abortion is a normal medical procedure, part of regular medicine, and the tissues from abortion are managed in the same way that all medical tissues are managed in health care.” The state has 30 days to appeal.

State by State

- *Golden state hits brakes on banning therapy:* In the September 1st edition of *Bioethics Public Policy Report* we noted that the California Senate had passed AB2943, a change to the state’s consumer fraud law that expanded restrictions on counseling for people seeking to change their same-sex attraction. Now, Evan Low (D), the bill’s author, has [pulled](#) it after discussions with faith leaders about possible long-term effects it could have. Low stated:

“The best policy is not made in a vacuum and in order to advance the strongest piece of legislation, the bill requires additional time to allow for an inclusive process not hampered by legislative deadlines. With a hopeful eye toward the future, I share with you that, despite the support the bill received in the Assembly and Senate, I will not be sending AB 2943 to the Governor this year.”

While this is truly good news, it is not the end of the story as similar bills could arise in the future. [Walt Heyer](#), a biological male who “transitioned” to a female and then “de-transitioned” back to a male through the help of two Christian psychotherapists, warned about what would happen if AB 2943—or any similar law—is passed in the future: “If AB2943 were in place back in the 1990s, most likely I would have died from suicide or—as this bill proposes—once I embraced my life as a trans-woman, I was sentenced for life.” He added, “The bill’s authors want to make sure the gender-dysphoric people they claim to be ‘helping’ have no way out, even if that’s what they desperately want. Only an uncaring legislature would sign such a draconian bill into law.”

International

- *South Korea introduces stricter abortion regulations:* In [South Korea](#), abortion is only legal in cases of rape, incest, diagnosis of genetic disorder, or when the woman’s health is at risk (although partner consent is required). However, the law is often ignored and it is estimated that one-in-five South Korean women have had an abortion. Now the nation’s health ministry has issued new regulations that punish doctors who perform illegal abortions by suspending their medical license for one month. The ministry also defined abortion as an “immoral medical action.” Not surprisingly, some physicians as well as abortion supporters have protested the new regulations.
- *Guatemala marches for life:* Thousands marched in [Guatemala](#) City on September 2nd to protest Bill 5376 which would legalize abortion up to 12 weeks of pregnancy for victims of rape. The march was organized by *Transformemos Guate* (“Let’s Transform Guatemala”), a citizens’ movement seeking to promote “full respect for the right to life and the express prohibition of abortion in any of its forms throughout the entire territory of the Republic of Guatemala.” The march included Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish leaders.
- *Dominican Republic marches for life:* Thousands of people marched in Santo Domingo, [Dominican Republic](#) on Sunday September 9th to oppose a bill in the

National assembly that would legalize abortion in cases of incest, rape, and fetal deformity. Currently, abortion is illegal in the nation. In leading the march, the Archdiocese of Santo Domingo stated it had an obligation to “warn what will happen” if abortion is approved for the reasons stated because in countries where similar laws were passed, “culture of death groups [then] demand that unrestricted abortion be approved.” In addition, the archdiocese maintained that in countries where abortion is legalized, maternal mortality does not decrease (an often-heard claim of abortion supporters) and neither do teen pregnancies. Outside organizations actively seeking to change the Dominican Republic’s abortion law include Planned Parenthood, George Soros’ Open Society, Human Rights Watch, and the United Nations Population Fund.

- *Fewer vaccinations means greater measles infections in Europe:* The World Health Organization is reporting that more than 41,000 people in [Europe](#) have been infected with measles through the first half of 2018, and at least 37 have died. This year’s infection rate is much higher than the average 12-month rate of 23,927 from the years 2010–2017. The increase is especially prevalent in France, Georgia, Greece, Italy, the Russian Federation, Serbia and Ukraine. The primary reason for the increase in measles is parents who refuse to vaccinate their children. Europe has become the region of the world most “skeptical to vaccine safety” and many people are supporting “parent’s choice.” While a 95 percent immunization rate is necessary to achieve “herd immunity” and prevent measles outbreaks, in some areas of Europe this number falls below 70 percent.
- *Buffer zones OK in UK:* [British](#) Home Secretary Sajid Javid has turned down requests from abortion supporters to establish buffer zones around abortion clinics throughout England and Wales. After reviewing evidence, Javid found that most abortion protests were “peaceful and passive” and that they consisted of “praying, displaying banners and handing out leaflets.” He added that there were “relatively few” reports of “aggressive activities” such as “handing out model fetuses, displaying graphic images, following people, blocking their paths and even assaulting them.” As such, he determined that enforcing buffer zones “would not be a proportionate response.”

Of Note

- *IVF craziness:* A man in Russia has successfully [sued](#) a Moscow IVF clinic after learning that his wife—with the help of the clinic—secretly used her lover’s sperm instead of his sperm in an IVF procedure.

Sharing the News: If you have public policy news that you would like to share with the NCBC, or if you have colleagues who would like to receive the Bioethics Public Policy Report, please contact Joe Zalot at 215-871-2014 or jzalot@ncbcenter.org.

Sharing the Resources: The web page of The National Catholic Bioethics Center, available at <http://www.ncbcenter.org/>, is a significant resource for bioethics information. NCBC bioethicists are also on-call for consultation twenty-four hours a day, seven days per week, at 215-877-2660.

Previous editions of the Bioethics Public Policy Report are available on the NCBC website at <https://www.ncbcenter.org/advocacy/public-policy-reports/>.