



Vice President, Practice Activities

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Barbara Susang-Talamo, MD, FACOG
4959 Simmons Circle
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Dear Dr. Susang-Talamo:

ACOG's Ethics Committee Opinions provide guidance to Fellows regarding ethical issues that arise in the specialty of obstetrics and gynecology. ACOG recognizes that the issue of support of or opposition to abortion is a matter of profound moral conviction to its members. ACOG, therefore, respects the need and responsibility of its members to determine their individual positions based on personal values or beliefs.

Ethics Committee Opinion #385 "The Limits of Conscientious Refusal in Reproductive Medicine" affirms the importance of a physician's conscience in shaping ethical and professional conduct. The substance of this Committee Opinion is not unique. Several other professional organizations, including the American Medical Association Council on Ethical and Judicial Affairs, the International Federation of Gynecology and Obstetrics, and the World Health Organization, have developed similar opinions on this subject.

ACOG affirms that while an individual physician is under no obligation to perform a procedure that conflicts with his or her conscience, neither should an individual physician's conscientious objection create a barrier to a patient's access to reproductive health care. Likewise, institutions and organizations should, to the best of their abilities, ensure nondiscriminatory access to all professional services while minimizing the need for practitioners to act in opposition to their deeply held beliefs.

This Committee Opinion is not referenced in ACOG's Code of Professional Ethics, and it cannot affect an individual's initial or continuing Fellowship in ACOG. Similarly, it is not cited in the literature of the American Board of Obstetrics and Gynecology. The Board has stated that such an issue is not a consideration in the applications or examinations for initial certification or maintenance of certification administered by the Board.

Thank you for taking the time to share your views.

Sincerely,

Hal C Lawrence III, MD, FACOG
Vice President, Practice Activities

HCL/MM/lc

cc: Anne D. Lyerly, MD, FACOG