

Abortion's Deleterious Effects on Women: Comprehensive Study Provides Convincing Evidence of Psychological Damage

BY NRL News Staff

Results of the Canterbury Health and Development Study published in the December edition of the *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry and Allied Disciplines* revealed that young women who aborted were at a significantly higher risk for depression, anxiety, suicidal behaviors, and substance use disorders compared to both women who carried a pregnancy to term and those who were never pregnant. This is only the latest in a string of well-documented studies that demonstrate a link between abortion and subsequent psychological and behavioral problems.

The study was lead by pro-choice researcher, David Fergusson of the Christchurch School of Medicine & Health Sciences. As noted in the *New Zealand Herald*, Dr. Fergusson said there is little evidence that abortion improves mental health.

Dr. Fergusson told CNSNews.com "It is a very sensitive and emotive subject. People have cherished beliefs that they don't want challenged." He added, "There's a distinct possibility -- more than a distinct possibility - that abortion may have mental health consequences."

Dr. Fergusson went further in his comments to the *New Zealand Herald*.

"If we were talking about an antibiotic or an asthma risk, and someone reported adverse reactions, people would be advocating further research to evaluate risk," he said. "I see no good reason why the same rules don't apply to abortion."

In the research report, Dr. Fergusson and his colleagues sternly questioned the American Psychological Association's recent conclusion that "well-designed studies of psychological responses following abortion have consistently shown that risk of psychological harm is low."

They note that the this strong conclusion was based on a small number of studies, which suffer form significant methodological problems as well as a general disregard for studies showing negative effects.

The Fergusson study shows that while 42% of the women who had aborted reported major depression by age 25, 39% of post-abortive women suffered from anxiety disorders. In addition, 27% reported experiencing suicidal ideation, 6.8% indicated alcohol dependence, and 12.2% were abusing drugs. These rates were dramatically higher than those reported by the women who delivered a child and by those who were never pregnant.

The longitudinal study followed 1,265 children born in Christchurch in 1977. The study is strengthened by both the use of comprehensive assessments of mental health and by considerably lower estimated abortion concealment rates than in previously published studies.

Dr. Priscilla Coleman, an abortion researcher from Bowling Green State University, said that there were additional indicators of methodological rigor present in the newly published study. For example, as she told NRL News, the case for causality is based on three basic principles. All were met in the Fergusson study.

Dr. Coleman told NRL News that this well-controlled, prospective study documents very strong

associations between abortion and a variety of mental health problems. She said it “provides convincing evidence for causality and should not be ignored or dismissed by the academic community.”

She added, “Women deserve to be fairly informed of the science and this is often not the case when communication is at the hands of a predominantly pro-choice media.”

The findings of this study are consistent with other studies published recently documenting adverse mental health problems associated with abortion. They appear on pages 16-18 of this edition of NRL News and in back issues over the past several months.

Pro-lifers in New Zealand and elsewhere are hopeful that the results of this study and others like it will prove instrumental in assuring passage of informed consent legislation.