


Restrictions on fetal tissue research: why are they part of the anti- choice agenda?

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Welcome!

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- Excited that everyone could join to learn about this important topic!
 - During the webinar, feel free to use the chat box to put in comments!



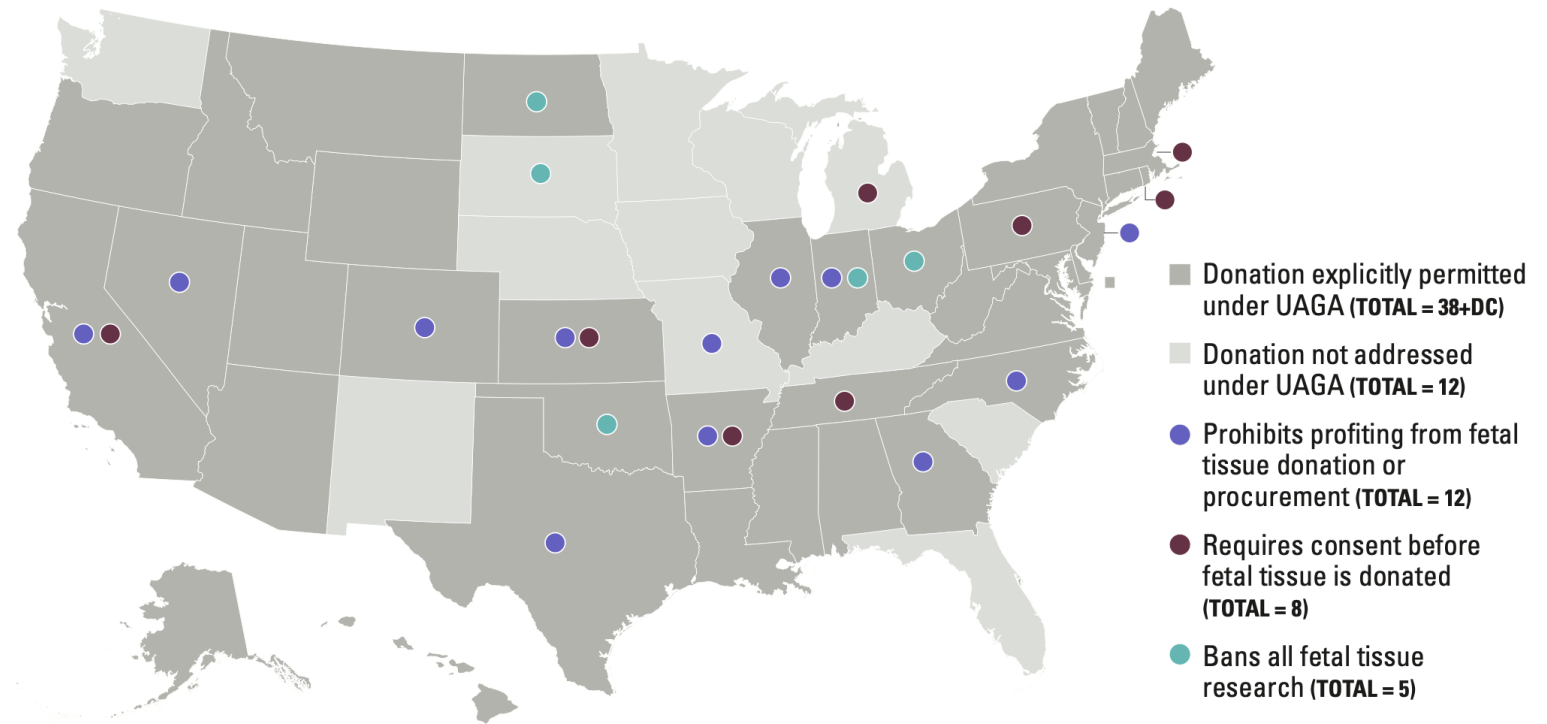
Learning Objectives

- Characteristics of fetal tissue research
- Scientific impact of fetal tissue research
- History of laws relating to fetal tissue research and donation
- Recent Trump/Pence administration regulations
- Main takeaway: Understand why fetal tissue research restrictions are part of the anti-choice agenda

(Relatively)
Current State of
Fetal Tissue
Donation &
Research: State
Level

State Laws on Fetal Tissue Donation and Research

In the states, donation is governed by the Uniform Anatomical Gift Act (UAGA). Many states also have other statutes on donation and research.



MGA Bill: House Bill 734

- Fetal tissue research prohibition bill
- Bans the following:
 1. Obtaining tissue from elective abortions for research
 2. Having incentives to obtain or to donate fetal tissue from elective abortions for research



Where is fetal tissue obtained from?

- Most fetal tissue that's used for research comes from abortions
 - Tissues from miscarriages are often difficult to use
- This is a major point of contention for anti-abortion legislators
 - Bills try limit the use and obtaining fetal tissue from elective abortions



Unique characteristics of fetal tissue

- Can be altered and adapted to new environments
- In contrast to adult cells, fetal cells can be more useful in research because they can transform into any cell in the body
- Quickly replicate and have different immune systems
- Cell culture from the fetal tissue can be maintained for decades in labs



Importance of fetal tissue research

- Critical in studying a variety of medical conditions and diseases
- Examples:
 - Degenerative eye disease
 - Down syndrome
 - Autism
 - Schizophrenia

Importance of fetal tissue research

- Vital in Vaccine development
- Examples:
 - Measles
 - Chickenpox
 - Tetanus
 - Polio

Importance of fetal tissue research

- Can conduct transplantation research with fetal cells
- Examples:
 - Spinal cord injury
 - ALS
 - Multiple sclerosis
 - Stroke

- 1968: Uniform Anatomical Gift Act
 - Revised later in 1987 and 2006
 - Administered at the state level
- 1974: National Research Act
 - Resulted from advisory panel from HHS
 - Ethical guidelines for research on human subjects

(A Brief)
History

- 1988: Implementation of temporary hold on government funded studies of fetal tissue retrieved from “intentional abortions”
 - Under Reagan Administration
- 1993: NIH Revitalization Act
 - Reversed 1988 hold
 - Some key provisions:
 - Prohibits profiteering
 - Additional Requirements for federal funded research, such as informed consent and prohibiting providers from altering the termination of a pregnancy
 - These standards govern ALL fetal tissue research, despite it only being intended for transplantation research

(A Brief) History

Anti-choice attacks

- 1999: Life Dynamics circulated a letter on Capitol Hill
 - Letter stated that physicians were altering abortion procedures in order to obtain tissue appropriate for use in research
 - Additionally, they focused on the issue of profiteering & many anti-choice representatives were receptive to Life Dynamics
 - Resulted in ABC 20/20 report showing a tissue owner profiting which sparked controversy over fetal tissue research

Anti-choice attacks

- 2015: Planned Parenthood
 - Heavily edited videos were released to capture “undercover” operations
 - an anti abortion activist was posing as a representative from a biomedical company and had frank conversations with PP representatives
 - The main goal: to show that PP was violating the NIH Revitalization Act
 - They used graphic language to portray PP in a negative light and turn the public against this research



Trump/Pence Admin Regulations

- Restricted fetal tissue research in multiple ways
 - Restricting experiments involving fetal tissue from elective abortions
 - Banning government scientists from conducting or using fetal tissue from elective abortions for research
 - Affects potential NIH grant proposals
 - NIH is overseen by HHS
 - Potentially the formation of fetal tissue advisory ethics board




From HHS Statement of 2019

- September 2018: terminated contracts between Advanced Bioscience Resources, Inc. & the Food and Drug Administration
- Conducted comprehensive review of all HHS research involving fetal tissue from elective abortions
- Same year: ended a \$2 million annual contract with the University of California, San Francisco (UCSF)




From HHS
Statement of
2019

- Huge emphasis on funding “adequate alternatives” outside of human fetal tissue from elective abortions
 - Statement suggested that they want to fund and accelerate the process of finding alternatives
 - December 2018: \$20 million from NIH was allocated to finding alternatives

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- Devastating impacts for the scientific community
 - Many scientists will have to rely on private funding
 - Concerns that private funds are not always available
 - Not all private donors will be willing to fund fetal tissue research



Impact of Regulations

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- Important takeaways:
 - There is an explicit anti-choice agenda
 - Elective abortions are further stigmatized
 - Supporting fetal tissue research in the abortion space = supporting the right to agency and bodily autonomy



Why is this important for activists?

Sources

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