Letters to the Editor

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Editor, Letters to the Editor Section

Editor’s Note: Send letters to the editor to jscherger@ucsd.edu or to my attention at Family Medicine Letters to the Editor Section, University of California, San Diego, 2658 Del Mar Heights Road #604, Del Mar, CA 92014. 858-232-8858. Fax: 858-565-4091. Electronic submissions (e-mail or on disk) are preferred. We publish Letters to the Editor under three categories: “In Response” (letters in response to recently published articles), “New Research” (letters reporting original research), or “Comment” (comments from readers).

In Response

Responses to Abortion Training

To the Editor:

We were shocked to read the letter by Clark et al in the January 2008 issue of Family Medicine. Clark cites references that are totally irrelevant to the published article to which it supposedly responded. We feel obligated to register disgust with the references made to slavery and the Holocaust. Also, it should be noted that the overall tone was akin to that of anti-choice extremists who would celebrate the murder of abortion providers.

In addition to the grotesque Nazi comparisons, the authors deceptively cited Dr Martin Luther King Jr and Thomas Jefferson. Martin Luther King proudly accepted the Margaret Sanger Award in 1966 from the Planned Parenthood Federation of America. Thomas Jefferson, a rationalist who railed against the attempts by Christian legislators in his state and country to break down the wall that separates church from state, wrote “Subject opinion to coercion: whom will you make your inquisitors? Fallible men; men governed by bad passions, by private as well as public reasons. . . . Difference of opinion is advantageous in religion. . . . Millions of innocent men, women, and children, since the introduction of Christianity, have been burnt, tortured, fined, imprisoned; yet we have not advanced one inch towards uniformity . . . What has been the effect of coercion? To make one half the world fools and the other half hypocrites. To support roguery and error all over the earth.”

Even more alarming is the position of two of the authors as residency directors. As family medicine faculty and residents, we are concerned that their program may violate the ACGME requirement that residents be trained in abortion options counseling.

Throughout history, extremists have sought to impose their values on others. Extremism has no place in our specialty nor in medicine in America.

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References


To the Editor:

The response of Dehlendorf et al to the letter from Clark et al was simple, clear and direct. However, further comment is warranted. Clark and his coauthors cite moral authority for their opposition to both abortion and abortion training in family medicine residencies and compare abortion to euthanasia, Nazi doctors, and slavery. The authors make a strong case for moral law, in the Christian tradition, but their sources make the case for morality, not against abortion. They cite Catholic saints, one 4th century and one 13th century, who had different positions on abortion. They also cite a 20th century Baptist minister and an 18th century Protestant deist, neither of whom are on record as opposing abortion but both of whom strongly supported tolerance.

Clark et al declare themselves to have the moral position, in their opposition to both abortion and the right of others to make the decision on abortion for themselves. I do not agree that they own the moral position. I believe myself to be highly moral and presumably agree with them on many issues (I oppose slavery and Nazi doctors) but disagree with their opposition to abortion to such a degree that they are willing to impose that value on everyone else by opposing education in abortion for those who wish to learn it.

What do we do when moral positions differ? If we come from a position of tolerance of others’ values, we live together in mutual respect. For example, we could oppose abortion (not have one if