



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on September 7, 2011

## Study Links Abortion to Mental Health Problems, Suicide

A recent U.S. study has confirmed that women who have abortions increase the likelihood of suffering from severe mental health issues. The study by Dr. Priscilla Coleman of Bowling Green State University, published in the prestigious *British Journal of Psychiatry*, found that women who opt to abort their babies nearly double their risk of mental health problems, compared to women who deliver their babies.

“Coleman’s study is based on an analysis of 22 separate studies which, in total, examine the pregnancy experiences of 877,000 women, with 163,831 women having an abortion,” reported the pro-life news site [LifeNews.com](#). “The study also indicated abortion accounts for one in ten of every adverse mental health issue women face as a whole.”



Coleman explained that the purpose of the study was “to produce an unbiased analysis of the best available evidence addressing abortion as one risk factor among many others that may increase the likelihood of mental health problems.” She said the research confirmed that there are “some real risks associated with abortion that should be shared with women as they are counseled prior to an abortion.” She added that the study “offers the largest estimate of mental health risks associated with abortion available in the world literature. The results revealed moderate to high increased risk of mental health problems after abortion. Consistent with evidence-based medicine, this information should be used by health care professionals.”

Coleman pointed out that other “less systematic reviews of the scientific literature on abortion and mental health ... are prone to bias, and as a result actively mislead the public.” Once such study cited by Coleman came from the [American Psychological Association](#) (APA), which in 2008, reported [CBS News](#), “charged a task force to review scientific evidence on the link between abortion and mental health. They acknowledged women may experience sadness, grief, depression, and anxiety following an abortion, but could not find evidence abortions—and not other factors—caused these effects.”

In a 2008 written statement Dr. Brenda Majors, chair of the APA task force declared: “The best scientific evidence published indicates that among adult women who have an unplanned pregnancy, the relative risk of mental health problems is no greater if they have a single elective first-trimester abortion or deliver that pregnancy. The evidence regarding the relative mental health risks associated with multiple abortions is more uncertain.”

Coleman said that the connection between abortion and mental health has often been “shrouded in political controversy,” preventing it from receiving the objective academic scrutiny it deserves. She advised that professionals conducting such research have a responsibility “to set aside personal



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ideological commitments, objectively examine all high-quality published data, and conduct analyses of the literature that are based on state-of-the-art data analysis procedures....”

Janet Morana of the [Silent No More Awareness Campaign](#), a group that reaches out to women who have suffered through an abortion, told LifeNews that the study is a confirmation of what millions of women around the world already know. “This report is devastating to those who try to deny the hurt and anguish women suffer from abortion,” she said. “The cruelty of those who lie to pregnant women about abortion’s impact is compounded by the heartlessness of abortion industry propagandists who dismiss post-abortive women’s pain as non-existent. After this enormous scientific study, abortion’s apologists should apologize to the millions of women they’ve tried to marginalize.”

Fr. Frank Pavone of [Priests for Life](#) said that he hoped the study would prompt more women who are suffering because of abortion to step forward for help from groups like Silent No More. “What I pray will be one of the major results of this study is that more women will realize that they are not alone,” he said. “The pain they’ve been internalizing, perhaps for years or decades, is not uncommon; in fact, it’s quite normal. There is help and there is healing.”

[Jeanne Monahan](#), director of the Center for Human Dignity at the [Family Research Council](#), said that as a result of the study “doctors now have a valid and unbiased synthesis of the current research available on the relationship between abortion and women’s mental health. Because it is a meta-analysis, the research is much more thorough and reliable than any other single study or review to date.”

Writing in [NationalReview.com](#), Michael J. New, a political science professor at the University of Michigan-Dearborn, said that the appearance of Coleman’s research “in a top psychiatry journal indicates that it was carefully critiqued and evaluated by respected public-health scholars.” He added that hopefully, “the prestige of the journal, the volume of studies included, and the consistency of the findings will encourage the mainstream media to give a second look to this important issue.”

Dr. Mary Davenport of the [American Association of Pro-Life Obstetricians and Gynecologists](#) said that the study has global implications. “For example,” she wrote in the [American Thinker](#), “South Korea not only has had a major increase in suicide, but also holds the world record for the highest rate of female suicide. This country is also called ‘the abortion paradise’ because at least 43.7% of pregnancies end in abortion.”

Davenport wrote that the “most sobering” aspect of Coleman’s report had to do with the Population Attributable Risk (PAR) for suicide, which was a dramatically high 34.9 percent. Explained the pro-life physician: “PAR estimates the proportion of deaths in an entire population that could be prevented if the cause of death is eliminated (in this case abortion as the cause of suicide in women). By so powerfully linking abortion to mental health problems, the Coleman study helps us comprehend the magnitude of the damage done to entire nations by reckless, permissive abortion policies.”



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