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Scientific Disinformation, Abuse, and Neglect Within Pro-Life

by

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As the battle surges over the abortifacient drug RU-486 (AKA mifepristone), disinformation is beginning to surface that does no justice to pro-life advocates in the marketplace of ideas. Disinformation is defined as the use of information that is deliberately in error to discredit the user of the information OR to distract the recipient of the information (AKA victim) into taking a course of actions they would not otherwise have taken.

In 1991, a National Right to Life publication published an article by Dr. Curtis Harris (President of The American Academy of Medical Ethics), entitled, "RU-486--A Chemical Time bomb?" Sadly, this physician of noted acclaim called RU-486 a catalyst within the cell. WRONG! A catalyst within the cell is by biochemical definition called an enzyme. RU-486 is NOT an enzyme; it is a steroid molecule.

Furthermore, Dr. Harris's article alluded to a similarity of RU-486 to the notorious drug, DES (Diethylstilbestrol). DES was remembered to have induced cancer in women taking the drug to relieve "morning sickness". Unfortunately, DES also caused daughters born from those women to have an unprecedented level of cervical cancer, and sons born from DES mothers to have a high rate of testicular cancer. In reality RU-486 is neither similar to DES in molecular structure NOR in its receptor binding affinity (DES binds to estrogen receptors whereas, RU-486 binds to progesterone and glucocorticoid receptors) (1,2,4).

Finally, Dr. Harris discusses the chemical breakdown of RU-486 in the body. His discussion was vastly in error and even if true would mean that simple amino acids like tyrosine would be toxic in the body! It was

this last conclusion that won the "compliment" from the well-known journal, *Chemical & Engineering News* (SEE REFERENCE 3); calling the article "scientifically laughable".

Sadly, Dr. Harris's biochemical breakdown discussion was flawed and smacked of fear-mongering. Ironically, Dr. Harris's article was written SEVERAL YEARS AFTER real pharmacokinetic studies had been published describing the real metabolic breakdown of RU-486 (SEE REFERENCE 4). Also, DES data (including its metabolites) has existed since the 1970's. Dr. Harris could have done a quick computer online database search (for example using MEDLINE/GRATEFUL MED) and located these articles to obtain the truth. It is unknown whether Dr. Harris deliberately wrote this article to discredit the pro-life movement (or whether simple incompetence occurred), but it may have this effect nevertheless. This aspect will be discussed next.

Abuse

The actions of Dr. Harris's article have already been detected. I had previously advised a major pro-life group as it prepared to file a legal petition to block FDA marketing approval of RU-486. Unfortunately, a significant amount of time was directed at extinguishing a myth that RU-486 is "like" DES. No scientific evidence existed to support this at all! Also, I had heard rumors that some pro-life advocates were already claiming that RU-486 is like DES. After extensive analysis of the pharmacokinetic, molecular structure, and physiological data, I found that RU-486 is NOT related to, NOR acts in a similar fashion to, DES. The problem is that the more certain pro-life advocates spread this myth around, the more others (especially those without a scientific background) will believe it! This effect, attributed to Nazi propagandist Herman Goebbels, is called "the BIG LIE". If one says it and hears it enough, one tends to believe it.

The serious consequences of this action can be that pro-life advocates lose their creditability in the mainstream public. Furthermore, when real scientific data describes a health threat, pro-life advocates lose influence in the legal, political, and media mainstream due to their previous poor track record. In essence, abusing scientific facts leads to the "scarlet letter" of "L" (for liar) stamped on future pro-life advocacy and educational efforts.

Another sad event that I found recently was the abuse of information by pro-life advocates who use pro-life scientific data or research and never give credit to the writer or researcher. I have been told that my writings regarding abortifacient vaccines are traveling around in

other pro-life newsletters and journals WITHOUT my permission and thereby violating U.S. copyright laws. The U.S. copyright laws are very restrictive and can instill heavy fines for those organizations that violate them. A while back, a Texaco research facility became an "example" by the Federal Government for violating publication copyrights (to the tune of 1 million dollars!). Some pro-life organizations could be shut down and the editors jailed for copying articles without permission or compensation to the author.

This brings me to another point. Recently, I spoke to a prominent pro-life writer and researcher who has written on such topics as: fetal tissue transplantation and human embryo experimentation. This individual told me that her work has been quoted on the floor of the House of Representatives by an equally prominent pro-life Congressman, EXCEPT the Congressman NEVER cited the author of the quoted work. The definition of plagiarism is to claim a select work of another as your own. Frankly, at present, pro-life has VERY few scientists, researchers, and writers with the scientific acumen and technical knowledge necessary to understand the ever-growing complexities of science and technology. If this type of behavior and abuse continues, pro-life will have NO ONE willing to take the time or have the skills to interpret and understand the complex medical, biotechnological, and technological developments occurring in the world and how they affect the pro-life movement.

Neglect

A while back, I spoke to another pro-life leader, Dr. Bogomir Kuhar, who is a leader of the group focusing on the pharmaceutical industry; Pharmacists for Life (PFL). At that time, another pro-life organization, Life Issues Institute (LII) led a coalition of pro-life and pro-family groups to boycott Hoechst AG, at that time the owner of Roussel-Uclaf (which makes and issues the foreign licensing for the drug RU-486). Although LII contacted many organizations, they NEVER contacted PFL. Also, it was conveyed to me by this PFL leader, that it was curious that LII would not have contacted their pro-life group which has the most experience in pharmaceuticals in general as well as detailed knowledge on the medical effects and pharmacological mechanism of action of RU-486.

Also, although the project director of LII's Hoechst boycott, Dr. Richard Glasow, has an impressive background; he has a Ph.D. in Education, not MEDICINE OR PHARMACOLOGY! By not accessing the real information and scientific experience within the pro-life movement, is not LII (and other groups) doing a disservice to its pro-life constituents...and the public at large? Without accessing those elements of

pro-life that have the training and scientific knowledge, we may be heading for another "scientifically laughable" debacle in the marketplace of ideas with regards to RU-486!

Aside of the signs that pro-life advocates are not using scientifically competent staff, another facet of this problem came to light in a discussion that I had with another scientific leader, Dr. David Larson. Dr. Larson heads the National Institute for Healthcare Research (NIHR). Dr. Larson is well known for his research describing the health effects of religion for both the individual and for the family. Also, he has done studies investigating the effects of religion on enhancing marriage and sexual relations within the marriage. After a discussion in which we mutually shared disappointments with pro-life and pro-family advocates (including the conservative media), I asked Dr. Larson a question. I asked him if he felt (as I did) that the pro-life, pro-family, Christian, and conservative forces really do not know what to do with us (the scientific and technological researchers). He agreed.

Why is this occurring? Perhaps pro-life does not know what to do with scientists and researchers because of the stereotype that "all" scientists are atheists or agnostics. This is certainly ridiculous in light of the array of qualified scientists and technically skilled individuals from such groups as: the Catholic Association of Scientists and Engineers (CASE); the Society of Catholic Social Scientists (SCSS), University Faculty for Life (UFL) and Scientists For Life (SFL). Many of these organizations include academics and scientific researchers with both a strong moral rudder directed towards the "Culture of Life" as well as a deep abiding faith in the Living God. Sadly, these organizations (and their members) are not properly promoted by pro-life advocates nor sufficiently funded by pro-life supporters or organizations to help build the "Culture of Life" that pro-life so often extols.

In one case supporting this last point; Dr. Keith Crutcher, President of Scientists For Life told me, that SFL is presently in an "inactive" status. Why? Despite their strong membership of between 200 to 300 members (many of whom are experts in biology, medicine, biochemistry, molecular biology, etc.), they lack FUNDING just to maintain a simple newsletter!

Secondly, perhaps another reason for the pro-life ambivalence to scientific and technological support is that pro-life is still caught up, as Alvin Toffler described, in "future shock". Future Shock has been defined as the disorientation, trauma, or lack of action as a society undergoes an ever-accelerating change of events in both history and culture. The simple speed up of events produces their own effects that may or may not be good (5). In layman's terms, as the world rapidly changes before us, we can not cope with the changes, nor can we foresee the changes occurring before us,

thus we are rendered helpless and impotent in the midst of a changing society.

Frankly, few would argue that the advancing pace towards a "culture of death" has been slow in the past four decades. From the legalization of abortifacient contraceptives; to the legalization of abortion; to fetal experimentation; to doctor-assisted suicide; and now, the onset of human cloning; the pace has been dizzying and has hit society with an almost blinding speed. It is no wonder that many Catholic, pro-life and pro-family groups are caught off guard and unaware of the tremendous moves in technology and the scientific developments destructive to life. Many are totally oblivious to the technologies presently under development in various medical institutes and pharmaceutical research labs that will further degrade life while in pursuit of profits and market shares.

Thirdly, another reason is that although pro-life is very efficient at fund raising and very effective at publishing, it is oblivious to the needs of the scientific and technological world that is rapidly spinning past them. This was best demonstrated by a conversation I had with pro-life fundraiser, John T. Finn. Mr. Finn, who runs Finn Communications (Redondo Beach, CA), a pro-life communications and marketing firm, told me that the pro-life industry (including education, literature sales, etc.) is a \$100 to \$200 million dollar industry. Now if much of the dollars raised is used on staff salaries, facilities upkeep, and education, why do many pro-life groups fail to have a FULL TIME scientific staff? Perhaps this could help explain the lamentation that I hear from many pro-lifers. In frustration, many pro-lifers urgently ask me: "After 25 years of legalized abortion, why are we still appearing to be losing the war?" Good question.

Why couldn't some of the millions of dollars raised be used to fund scientific research, provide grants for academic researchers, or even fund a scientific or technical "Think Tank"? Perhaps, it is time to ask this question to many pro-life organizations.

One event in 1993 has further convinced me of this phenomenon of scientific and technological neglect by pro-life forces. On a visit to the Human Life International Headquarters (then in Gaithersburg, MD), I had lunch with Fr. Paul Marx and his publications staff. The staff spoke to him of the need to get a scientist on board the staff. They explained that someone is needed with the biological, medical, and technological acumen that could address the pro-life challenges that are occurring in this "high tech" society.

Fr. Marx is a good man, but he had great difficulty understanding the pharmacological, computer technology, and medical issues that were brought up by his staff. Furthermore, Fr. Marx spoke of relying on the assistance from other organizations and other leaders. The reality of this

solution is that many pro-life groups hoard information and do not freely give it out. Furthermore, many pro-life organizations focus on select projects and can not afford the staff to investigate other topics outside their select project goals. Many pro-life groups do not have a FULL TIME staff trained and actively engaged in issues of science and technology (As opposed to the research arm of Planned Parenthood, the Alan Guttmacher Institute, which has a full time research group actively publishing research to promote a pro-choice agenda!). In essence, no one has the time to give assistance to another organization (especially outside of that organization's own itinerary!).

Finally, today to do a proper scientific or technological investigation on an issue requires MONEY! Many times, good researchers and investigators can not nor will not give out free work anymore. The work (including computer database searches, phone calls, biochemical analysis, etc.) costs money and these costs rapidly add up. I have been repeatedly called to provide FREE information and advice for a variety of pro-life issues. Although these same organizations are actively raising funds (in some cases, hundreds of thousands to millions of dollars), they balk at paying for hard scientific and technological research.

Recently, I have been informed that some scientific experts in the fields of pharmacology and embryology refuse to serve henceforth pro-life groups for free. These scientists can not afford to give away their time and resources (They have families to feed too!). Unfortunately, these protests are occurring at a critical time in which topics such as market acceptance of RU-486 and emergency contraceptives (actually abortion inducing) pills and the rise of human cloning and fetal tissue experimentation have risen to public notice.

The Future

The future is rapidly racing towards us. If pro-life wishes to continue to be a beacon enlightening the public to life-affirming issues and a Klaxon to the death regimentation, it must learn to readily access sound and ACCURATE scientific and technological information. Furthermore, with the onset of fax broadcasting, the INTERNET, and alternative media, pro-life must learn to access these tools to enhance their educational efforts AND circumvent the pro-choice and liberal dominated media.

If pro-life advocates think these are words spent in vain, let me describe a few of the topics that pro-life will contend with in the near future: "harvesting" organs from advanced Alzheimer patents (thereby re-defining when a patient is brain dead); the use of abortifacient vaccines, emergency "double dose" contraceptive pills, and Embryo Toxic Factor as

long term or quick fix abortion tools; the use of the human embryo for the development of new contraceptives (including second generation abortifacient vaccines); human cloning; rapid access to Human Genome information and technology for the development of "Eugenically Improved" humans.

If some of these topics are strange or unbelievable, that is because pro-life has not accessed the proper sources of technological and scientific information (YES! This information exists now!). Also, by accessing scientific and technological sources, alternatives can be found and advocated (either in real research or at the public debate). Already, biotechnological and biomedical advances exist to provide alternatives to fetal tissue transplants, abortifacient "birth control" methods (like the "pill"), doctor assisted suicide, and fetus-endangering amniocentesis. Pro-life would do well to explore these issues before it is too late.

Finally, pro-life needs to access scientific and technological expertise so as to avoid becoming Neo-Luddites. Luddites were British workers who rejected industrial machinery during the 19th Century Industrial Revolution in Great Britain. Upon seeing the loss of their jobs due to industrialization, many Luddite workers attacked British factories, rampaged, and destroyed the machinery. Hence, any anti-technological mentality is commonly referred to as Neo-Luddite (6).

Pro-life advocates must never be recognized as Neo-Luddite in mentality. Many scientific and technological developments have saved lives and improved the quality of life for many individuals (including fetuses months prior to their birth!). Rather, pro-life advocates must access scientific professionals to clearly understand these scientific and technological developments. In essence, pro-life advocates will be able to separate the wheat (life affirming technology) from the chaff (death affirming technology).

Finally, there exists the concept of the "Eleventh Commandment": Thou Shall Not Speak Ill of Other Pro-lifers or Pro-life Leaders. In the present age, ignorance can no longer blind the public to incompetence. Furthermore, it should not be a crime to ask pro-life forces to become more efficient in using all resources entrusted to or donated to it. This includes scientific and technological resources as well as financial resources. In short, ignoring waste and abuse today could lead to the pro-life version of the Jim and Tammy Baker crisis of credibility some time in the future.

Should pro-life not develop and responsibly use scientific and technological resources, it will face a bleak future. This future will describe pro-life activism as one of dwindling resources, shoddy reputation, and technological ignorance.

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6-Sale, Kirkpatrick. 1995. *Rebels Against the Future: The Luddites and their War on the Industrial Revolution*. Boston, MA: Addison-Wesley.

SIDEBAR:
Pro-Life Scientific Organizations:

CASE-Catholic Association of Scientists and Engineers

Contact: Dr. Francis Kelly, President

8308 Rambler Drive

Adelphi, MD 20783

Tel: 301-422-9035

SCSS-Society of Catholic Social Scientists

Contact: Dr. Stephen Krason, President

Political Science Program

Franciscan University of Steubenville

University Boulevard

Steubenville, Oh 43952

Tel: 740-283-6416

Fax: 740-283-6401

Email: scssfus@ovnet.com

Web site: <http://gabriel.franuniv.edu/SCSS>

UFL-University Faculty for Life

Contact: Dr. Richard J. Fehring, Ph.D., Vice President for Membership

Email: fehringr@vms.csd.mu.edu

OR WRITE: University Faculty for Life

120 New North Building

Georgetown University

Washington, DC 20057

Web site: www.marquette.edu/ufl

PFL-Pharmacists For Life International

Contact: Dr. Bogomir Kuhar, Pharm. D., Founder

Pharmacists For Life International

P.O. Box 1281

Powell, OH 43065-1281

Tel: 800-227-8359 (in U.S. and Canada only)

Email: pfli@ix.netcom.com

Web site: www.pfli.org

SFL Scientists For Life – Inactive at the present time.