

Baby Doe Symposium

The 25th Anniversary of the Baby Doe Rules: Perspectives from the Fields of Law, Health Care, Ethics, and Disability Policy

Friday, February 13, 2009

Atlanta, Georgia

Welcome to the Web site for the Spring 2009 *Georgia State University Law Review* symposium. The symposium, "The 25th Anniversary of the Baby Doe Rules: Perspectives from the Fields of Law, Health Care, Ethics, and Disability Policy," was held on Friday, February 13, 2009 at Georgia State University located in downtown Atlanta. Nationally-prominent experts in the fields of neonatal medicine, law, ethics, and disability policy explored controversial issues involved in treatment decisions for premature and other medically at-risk infants.

Symposium Description

A highly publicized and controversial case involving the withholding of medical treatment from a "Baby Doe" with Down syndrome gave rise in 1984 to the federal law known as the Baby Doe Rules, which went into effect the following year. The law conditions the grant of federal funds for any state's child protective services program on the state's assurance that it can respond to reports of medical neglect, which may include the withholding of medical treatment from disabled infants with life-threatening conditions. Leading scholars and practitioners from the fields of health care, law, ethics, and disability policy who are experts in the field of neonatal medicine and decision-making involving very premature and other medically at-risk infants gathered to provide thoughtful commentary and debate on the occasion of the 25th Anniversary of the Baby Doe Rules. The *Georgia State University Law Review* will publish a symposium volume on the topic in Fall 2009.

Target Audience

Bioethicists, attorneys, physicians, hospital administrators, hospital ethics committee members, nurses, social workers, other health professionals involved in pediatric and neonatal care, disability policy organizations and individuals, and academics involved in these disciplines

Symposium Objectives

At the conclusion of the symposium, participants will:

- Understand the impact of the Baby Doe Rules over the past 25 years in decision-making for medically at-risk infants
- Recognize the key provisions of the Baby Doe Rules and how they apply to treatment decisions for infants
- Appreciate the roles of parents, health care providers, and government in treatment decisions for extremely premature or other sick newborns
- Understand how principles from different perspectives - ethics, disability rights, law and health care - influence and interact in decision-making regarding treatment of seriously-ill newborns
- Identify key legal and ethical issues in the provision of care that some providers may deem futile
- Learn ways of resolving conflicts over the care of very sick newborns, including mediation and communication skills