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# Abortion is Not Healthcare

*The historical and biblical understanding of a doctor's obligation*

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MY OBGYN, DR. JOHN Bruchalski, used to be an abortionist. When he was conducting his residency in Virginia, an attempted late-term abortion he was performing turned into an unexpected delivery. Under Virginia law, he was required to send that living, breathing baby, even at just 1 pound, 1 ounce, to the neonatology unit for care. With his training as an abortionist, he saw this botched abortion as a problem. The neonatologist saw things differently.

When Dr. Bruchalski called her, she scolded him for treating the baby like a “cancerous tumor,” instead of the living human being that the baby was.<sup>1</sup>

How could two doctors’ approaches to healthcare be so different—no, not only different, but inherently antithetical? How does the abortionist’s “care,” which prematurely ends the life inside the womb, cohere with that of the neonatologist’s, which seeks to nurture the prematurely born to health?

Indeed, does it even make sense to call what both of these doctors do “healthcare”? Is healthcare anything a doctor does for a living? Or is the location important—is it anything done in a hospital or clinic? Is healthcare anything we call it, anything we want it to be?

Our relativistic, secular culture may say so, but a theologically orthodox account of healthcare is morally important to uphold.

Embedded in the words “health” and “healthcare” is the word “heal,” a word that has deep historical and biblical significance.

## A BIBLICAL UNDERSTANDING OF HEALTHCARE

The Hippocratic Oath, which physicians have been guided by for more than 2,000 years, begins with a vow to the healer (ἱητρὸν) deity, along with a promise to “benefit my patients according to my greatest ability and judgment.”<sup>2</sup> Certain practices and disciplines are off-limits to health professionals: physicians vow to “do no harm or injustice” to their patients, and they vow not to “give a lethal drug to anyone [even] when asked,” nor provide an abortion (οὐδὲ γυναικὶ πεσσὸν φθόριον δῶσω).<sup>3</sup> From the beginning of the profession, there was a distinction drawn from practices intended to heal and those, like euthanasia and elective abortion, which were not.

Likewise, in the Bible, “healer” is one of the most common identifiers for Jesus, as well as the Father, Jehova Rapha, “the Lord Who Heals.” Biblical healing is always about restoration: sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, and strength to the weak and crippled. In fact, the whole biblical story is about healing: of a fall that took place in our bodies, cursed our bodies, and ultimately of a healer who will restore us to our bodies in glory. Restoration is an affirmation of the goodness of God’s original creation and a

sign of our ultimate destiny as human beings with God in eternity. When Jesus heals, he restores nature to its intended state of being (Rom. 8:19-21).

This is what healthcare is: the practice of healing, the restoration of the body's integrity and wholeness, a recognition of and reprieve from the curse of sin, which separates our bodies from our sense of self, and ourselves from God. Healing is a gift.

However, there are many things, some even seemingly mundane, that our modern secular culture considers "healthcare" that do not qualify as such under this traditional historical and biblical definition. In most of these cases, healthcare providers' innate compassion for the sufferer compels them to try to solve

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their problems through the use of surgery or medicine. But if the "healing" is not restorative of the body's integrity and wholeness, we've made a mistake: we've assumed that our suffering can be solved by medicine, technology, and yes, so-called "healthcare." But in reality our suffering is rooted in a deeper problem: our alienation from God, which has resulted in our alienation from our own bodies.

As Christians, we are called to suffer and to suffer well. This is countercultural, especially in today's world. By all means, we should make use of the gift of healthcare that God, in his mercy, has granted to us through the brilliant minds of the doctors and researchers and scientists that He has created. But when that so-called healthcare reaches beyond the bounds of healing, we must abstain, even if it means our suffering could be greater for it.

### **ABORTION IS NOT HEALTHCARE**

Perhaps one of the most insidious and lethal tactics used by abortion proponents is the equation of abortion with healthcare. Elective abortion is not and never can be healthcare, because elective abortion is the willful destruction of a body—the unborn body.<sup>4</sup> Nothing with the explicit purpose of destroying the body can be considered healthcare. Indeed, the destruction of the body is antithetical to the true nature of reality: the biblical story of creation, fall, salvation, and glorification. The destruction of the body is satanic, in the most literal sense of the word: "the thief comes to steal, kill, and destroy"—this is what elective abortion is, no matter what our culture deigns to call it.<sup>5</sup>

Regardless of one's position or worldview, pregnant women, and especially pregnant women who do not wish to be pregnant, are deserving of compassion; as Dr. Bruchalski himself once

told me, pregnancy and childbearing are affected by the curse of the Fall. As beautiful and miraculous as pregnancy is, it also comes with much pain and suffering, physically, mentally, and emotionally. But our compassion should not compel us to "solve" the pregnant woman's suffering by killing the life inside of her womb. They are symbiotically connected, but they are separate human beings. They are two different patients deserving and in need of care.

Not long after Dr. Bruchalski's botched abortion attempt, a series of miraculous encounters transformed his life—and the lives of his future patients, born and preborn. He told his hospital he could no longer perform abortions, and eventually began what would become the largest pro-life obstetric and gynecological practice in the nation, Tepeyac OB/GYN. Dr. Bruchalski began practicing true healthcare: healthcare which recognized that there were two patients in the exam room upon which he was called to have compassion and care.<sup>6</sup>

There are powerful historical, biblical, and moral arguments for insisting that abortion is not healthcare. But even more importantly, God has written his law into the hearts of every human being, "their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts sometimes accusing them."<sup>7</sup> While we can take confidence in knowing the truth that abortion is not healthcare, ultimately we should be praying for those with whom we disagree: that God would trouble their hearts and reveal himself and the truth to them in a saving encounter, just as he did for Dr. Bruchalski.



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1 Dr. John Bruchalski: From Abortionist to Pro-Life Doctor, <https://divinemercycare.org/abortionist-to-pro-life-doctor/>.

2 Greek text: Hippocrates Collected Works I. Hippocrates. W. H. S. Jones. Cambridge. Harvard University Press. 1868; English text: Hippocratic Oath. Hippocrates. Michael North. National Library of Medicine. 2002; both are accessible via <http://data.perseus.org/texts/urn:cts:greekLit:tlg0627.tlg013.perseus-eng3>

3 Ibid.

4 I am distinguishing here between elective abortion (abortion performed not for medical reasons but simply upon the request of the woman) and other types of medical practices that are often called "abortion" or coded as such in medical settings. Miscarriage is also called "spontaneous abortion," and sometimes requires the use of medical tools used in abortions to evacuate the uterus. This is not abortion. Similarly, ectopic pregnancy care is medically and morally distinct from elective abortion, as ectopic pregnancies are lethal for the baby and the mother. For more on the difference between these legitimate medical practices and elective abortion, see the following: <https://www.christianitytoday.com/news/2022/may/christian-ob-gyn-abortion-law-miscarriage-ectopic-pregnancy.html>.

5 John 10:10

6 Dr. Bruchalski's new book, *Two Patients*, details his conversion story and was released on October 11, 2022 via Ignatius Press: <https://ignatius.com/two-patients-tp/>.

7 Romans 12:15