



Bernard Dickens, Emeritus, Faculty of Law, University of Toronto

Post-Abortion Care: Legal and Ethical Issues

Thursday, November 21, 2019
12:30 - 2:00 Falconer Hall, Solarium
(Room FA2), 84 Queen's Park

Women who experience complications from abortion, whether unlawful or lawful, induced or spontaneous, need immediate post-abortion care. Delay in providing care might cause women's avoidable disability, lost childbearing capacity, or death. Rendering care is not an abortion procedure nor illegal, and does not justify conscientious objection. Harm reduction strategies to reduce effects of unsafe abortion may legitimately inform women who might consider resort to abortifacient interventions of their rights to professional post-abortion care. Healthcare practitioners' refusal or failure to provide available care might constitute ethical misconduct and attract legal liability, for instance for negligence. States are responsible to ensure healthcare practitioners' and facilities' provision of post-abortion care, including both medical care and psychological support, delivered with compassion and respect for dignity, and to suppress stigmatization of patients and/or caregivers. Mandatory reporting of patients suspected of criminal abortion violates professional confidentiality. States' failures of indicated care might constitute human rights violations.

Bernard M. Dickens

LL.B., LL.M., Ph.D. (Law-Criminology), LL.D. (Medical Jurisprudence) (London), LL.D. (Sherbrooke, h.c.), a member of the English Bar and the Ontario Bar, is Professor Emeritus of Health Law and Policy in the Faculty of Law, the Faculty of Medicine, and the Joint Centre for Bioethics at the University of Toronto. He is legal articles co-editor of the *Journal of Law, Medicine and Ethics*, and co-editor of ethical and legal issues of the *International Journal of Gynecology and Obstetrics*. He is also a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada and an Officer of the Order of Canada. Professor Dickens's writing includes over 450 publications, including books, chapters in books, articles and reports, primarily in the field of medical and health law. His most recent book, co-edited with Rebecca J. Cook and Joanna N. Erdman, is *Abortion Law in Transnational Perspective: Cases and Controversies*, published in 2014 by University of Pennsylvania Press.

A light lunch will be provided
For more information about this workshop, please send an e-mail to
events.law@utoronto.ca