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## **New Study Links Abortion to Wide Range of Mental Health Disorders Abortion More Traumatic Than Other Stressful Experiences**

Springfield, IL (Dec. 11, 2008) -- A new study published in the *Journal of Psychiatric Research* found that women who have abortions are at higher risk for various mental health disorders.<sup>1</sup>

The study, led by Priscilla Coleman of Bowling Green State University, used data drawn from a nationally representative survey of mental health conducted by the University of Michigan. A subsample of 5,877 women were asked about their abortion history, stressful life experiences and other potential risk factors for various mental health disorders.

Researchers studied 15 different mental health problems that included anxiety disorders (panic disorder, panic attacks, agoraphobia and post-traumatic stress disorder), mood disorders (bipolar disorder, mania and major depression) and substance abuse disorders (alcohol and drug use and dependence).

The researchers wrote that, according to their findings, "For every disorder, the abortion group had a higher frequency that was statistically significant." After removing other factors, they found that abortion "made a significant contribution" for 12 out of the 15 disorders studied. Only mania and drug and alcohol use without addiction were not significantly associated with abortion.

Overall, mental disorders among women who had abortions were 17 percent higher than among women who did not have abortions. When researchers looked at specific disorders, the increased rate among women who had abortions ranged from 44 percent higher for panic attacks and 167 percent higher for bipolar disorder.

### **Abortion Increases Risks More Than Other Traumas**

Women who had abortions were also more likely to report a history of sexual abuse and to have experienced stressful events in adulthood, such as miscarriage, physical violence or being in a life-threatening accident. The researchers noted that women who experience domestic violence are more likely to abort compared to women who are not in violent situations.

But the researchers also found that abortion was more likely to cause mental health problems among women than was a history of other traumas such as childhood sexual abuse, rape, physical violence or neglect.

"What is most notable is that abortion contributed significant independent effects to numerous mental health problems above and beyond a variety of other traumatizing and stressful life experiences," they wrote.

Abortion advocates and some researchers have argued that the increase in mental health problems among women who have abortions is caused by previous traumas or pre-existing mental health problems among women who abort. This study found otherwise, as did the findings of a 2005 New Zealand study which found that, even after controlling for existing mental health problems, women who aborted were more likely to later experience depression, anxiety disorders, substance abuse and suicidal thoughts.<sup>2</sup>

### **More Evidence of Abortion Trauma**

[Previous research](#) has linked abortion to an increase in mental health problems such as suicide, depression, substance abuse, anxiety, sleep disorders, symptoms of post-traumatic stress and other

problems. But this is the first study to identify links between abortion and agoraphobia, panic attacks and panic disorders.

The findings are especially worrisome in the light of [other research and anecdotal evidence](#) suggesting that many women and teens have unwanted abortions due to pressure, disinformation, lack of support, coercion or violence. According to one survey, 64 percent of American women undergoing abortions said they felt pressured to do so by others, while more than 80 percent reported they did not receive adequate counseling beforehand and more than half said they felt rushed or uncertain before the abortion.<sup>3</sup>

Further, another survey found that 95 percent of women said they wanted to be informed of all the risks before undergoing an elective procedure such as abortion.<sup>4</sup> Unfortunately, much pre-abortion counseling—when it is offered—gives women and their partners or families deceptive or inadequate information in order to reassure or sell them on abortion, rather than helping the woman find the best solution for her and her unborn baby.

This study adds more evidence to the need for meaningful help and alternatives to abortion, as well as a mechanism to hold abortion businesses liable for failing to screen for coercion and other known factors that put women and teens at risk for mental health disorders after abortion.

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To view the Elliot Institute's model bill holding abortionists liable for failing to screen for coercion and psychological risk factors before abortion, visit [www.stopforcedabortions.com](http://www.stopforcedabortions.com).

### Citations

1. Coleman, PK et. al., "Induced abortion and anxiety, mood, and substance abuse disorders: Isolating the effects of abortion in the national comorbidity survey," *Journal of Psychiatric Research* (2008), doi:10.1016/j.jpsychires.2008.10.009.
2. Fergusson, DM et. al., "Abortion in young women and subsequent mental health," *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry* (2006) 47(1): 16-24.
3. Rue, VM et. al., "Induced abortion and traumatic stress: A preliminary comparison of American and Russian women," *Medical Science Monitor* (2004) 10(10): SR5-16.
4. Coleman, PK et. al., "Women's preferences for information and complication seriousness ratings related to elective medical procedures," *Journal of Medical Ethics*, 32:435-438 (2006).