

The Patients of Dr. George Tiller *Their Stories*

Jane Doe:

“I don’t want my records out. I don’t need the worst time in my life sprawled across the desks of people I have no idea who they are or what they want.”

Doe, a 41-year-old office worker, and her husband were very excited when they learned they were pregnant with their third child. Doctors had found Doe had low fluid levels, but everything seemed fine. When she and her husband went to see a fetal specialist, they thought the worst case scenario was she would be placed on bed rest. But the specialist soon discovered that her fetus had a fatal heart defect and only a slim chance of surviving. Doe and her husband were devastated. They had never considered abortion before, but the thought of watching their baby suffer was too much to bear. After painfully deliberating their options, they ultimately decided that having an abortion was the best decision. Since Doe was past 22 weeks, she needed someone with expertise in performing abortions at that stage and Dr. Tiller was a logical choice. She says his clinic provided her the compassionate and understanding service she so desperately needed.

Sarah Coe:

“I will talk openly about what happened with people I choose to tell, but I believe the decision to talk about this is mine, not the grand jury’s.”

Coe, a 38-year-old married woman from the East Coast and her husband were finally going to have their first child after trying to get pregnant for three years. By Coe’s twenty-second week though, her doctors found an abnormal buildup of cerebral spinal fluid in the fetus’ brain which meant her fetus had severe hydrocephaly. The fluid can interfere with the blood supply to the brain, eventually depriving it of oxygen. Coe was told that the baby would likely die either during pregnancy or at birth and that if he did survive, he would be in a vegetative state his entire life. She and her husband sought advice from several doctors and her husband’s pastor. They eventually decided to terminate the pregnancy. Coe was unable to find a physician near her home and was directed to Wichita. She says she was “blown away by the kindness” and support from Dr. Tiller’s staff and scares her that if something happens to Dr. Tiller, so many women will have nowhere to turn.

Paula Poe:

“I’m not ashamed, but my experience was very personal and private. It was the hardest thing I’ve ever had to go through and to drag it into the public and put it out there for other people to see is very shocking.”

Poe, a graduate student in her mid-twenties who lives in the Southwest, thought she was having a normal pregnancy. She and her husband had already gone through one

successful pregnancy and thought that this time everything was fine. On two occasions, their doctor noticed that the legs of the fetus were measuring short, but told them that the pregnancy was going well. Eventually, they were sent to a specialist and that's when they discovered right away that something was wrong. The fetus had a serious genetic disorder often called Brittle Bone Disease. Its bones were so fragile that they broke very easily from no apparent cause. In all likelihood, the doctors told Poe the baby would not survive the birth. Before this experience, Poe considered herself anti-choice, but when faced with this difficult decision, she thought she would "mentally go insane" if she had to watch her baby die. Poe turned to Dr. Tiller and says he and the clinic made one of the hardest experiences she had bearable and facilitated the healing process.

Ann Roe:

"Although I did not have an abortion, I do not want my medical records from Dr. Tiller's officer—or any medical records of mine—to be turned over to a grand jury...I am horrified by what I see on the news about people going after Dr. Tiller and his patients."

Kansas resident Roe and her husband looked forward to having a second child. But twenty-two weeks into her pregnancy, the fetus was diagnosed with severe spina bifida, a birth defect that involves the incomplete development of the spinal cord. She and her husband sought a second opinion and that doctor confirmed the original diagnosis. Roe and her husband were very upset and weighed their options. They decided they did not want their child to suffer in pain and agony his or her whole life, so decided to terminate the pregnancy. The couple visited Dr. Tiller's clinic, but before proceeding told him what the other doctors had discovered. Dr. Tiller performed a sonogram, and after reviewing it, concluded that the fetus was healthy and encouraged the couple to proceed with the pregnancy. Roe and her husband followed Dr. Tiller's advice and gave birth to a healthy baby girl. Roe says "Dr. Tiller saved my baby's life."

Bio for Dr. George Tiller

Dr. George Tiller, the Medical Director for Women's Health Care Services in Wichita, Kansas, has provided abortion services since 1973. He pioneered the use of sonogram imaging during surgery and other procedures that have been adopted as the standard of care for abortion providers nationwide. He attended University of Kansas School of Medicine and served as a U.S. Navy Flight Surgeon. Dr. Tiller is a Diplomat of the American Board of Family Practice Physicians. His vast experience over three decades of family medicine practice, both inpatient and outpatient, help him bring the excellence of diversity into focus on this very specialized area of medicine and women's health care. He has received numerous awards including the National Abortion Federation's highest honor, the Christopher Tietze Humanitarian Award and the Religious Coalition for Abortion Rights' Faith and Freedom Award.