

Leading doc tells Congress pro-choicers 'misinformed'

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WASHINGTON — The head of the American Society of Anesthesiologists yesterday accused abortion-rights activists of spreading medical "misinformation" and scaring moms-to-be.

The furor erupted during a testy House hearing on late-term "partial birth" abortion — and recent claims by pro-choicers that anesthesia given to the patient kills the fetus before the controversial procedure does.

ASA President Norig Ellison blasted that claim as an "entirely inaccurate" myth provoking "fear" in some pregnant patients who need surgery.

"Pregnant women are routinely heavily sedated ... for a variety of necessary surgical procedures with absolutely no adverse effect on the fetus, let alone death," Ellison told the panel.

The hearing, with graphic drawings of the gruesome abortion procedure on display, was held days before the House is scheduled to vote on a Senate-backed bill banning the rarely-used procedure except to save the mother's life.

During the procedure, the fetus' brains are removed by suction through an incision in the neck.

Pro-choice activists didn't produce any medical experts to support the claim that the fetus is killed by anesthesia — instead, pro-choice Rep. Patricia Schroeder (D-Colo.) dismissed the hearing as "political theater."

"This is a distraction ... This is a new American witchcraft trial," said Schroeder, adding that the real issue is "a bill that would take away doctors' choices" to save women's lives and preserve their fertility.

Anesthesia
information

But David Birnbach, head of obstetric anesthesiology at New York's St. Luke's-Roosevelt Hospital Center, warned the misinformation "may cause some to unnecessarily delay emergency surgery ... Pregnant women must get the message that should they need anesthesia, they may do so without worrying."

GOP House members specifically rebuked National Abortion Rights Action League President Kate Michelman for publicly claiming "the anesthesia that they give the woman already causes the demise of the fetus" before the brain suctioning.

"If it was a mistake, say it was a mistake ... that would be the responsible thing to do," fumed panel chairman Charles Canady (R-Fla.).

NARAL political director, Jo Blum, told The Post her organization "relied on credible medical testimony" from doctors who performed the procedure.

When asked if NARAL still stood by its original position, she said, "there is clearly a difference of opinion" among doctors.

In moving testimony, two California women who underwent the unusual abortion procedure after discovering they were carrying babies with fatal deformities, pleaded with House members not to ban the procedure.

They argued it was a safe method that didn't risk infertility. Both are now pregnant again.