

## Global Life Campaign

### GLC Series D: Truth about Abortion #9

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# Many Contraceptives May Cause Early Unknown Abortions

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The Truth About Abortion (of GLC Series) focuses this month on when conception takes place, why some claim “conception” occurs after implantation, and whether many contraceptives may be causing early, unknown abortions. The first two parts below were reviewed by physicians and included in the *Abortion Worldwide Report* in the brief titled, “Scientific and Medical Evidence of the Humanity of the Baby in the Womb” (GLC Publications, 2018).

**1. Does Pregnancy Begin at Conception or Implantation?** The first *Webster’s Dictionary* in 1828 defined pregnancy as: “The state of a female who has conceived, or is with child.”<sup>1</sup> *The Oxford Medical Companion* (1994) defines pregnancy as: “the condition of being with child or young, that is having within the body a fertilized ovum (zygote), a developing embryo, or a growing fetus.”<sup>2</sup> The *Concise Medical Encyclopedia* (2006) of the American Medical Association defines pregnancy as: “The period from conception to birth, usually lasting about 40 weeks” (Lipsky). *Mosby’s Medical Dictionary* (2009) defines pregnancy as: “the gestational process, comprising the growth and development within a woman of a new individual from conception through the embryonic and fetal periods to birth.”<sup>3</sup> Each of these definitions recognizes that pregnancy begins with conception (fertilization).

**2. Redefining Conception as After Implantation.** Some doctors and medical associations have arbitrarily sought to redefine pregnancy as beginning at the point of implantation. While such issues of terminology may not change our understanding of the details of human development, they do change how we organize our thoughts about the subject. In this particular case, redefining pregnancy serves to hide the fact that abortifacients and many contraceptives can cause the death of a human being in the earliest stages of development. As Human Life International explains:

In order to make abortion-causing methods more palatable in societies that still widely rejected abortion, and to circumvent laws designed to prohibit abortion, the promoters of birth control realized that they had to blur the line between conception-preventing (contraceptive) and early abortion-causing (abortifacient) actions. They did this by changing the definition of ‘conception’ from *fertilization* [union of spermatozoa and ovum] to *implantation*.<sup>4</sup> (HLI, “Abortifacients”)

Thus in 1965, the American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology (ACOG) published their own definition: “Conception is the implantation of a fertilized ovum” (ACOG, “Terminology Bulletin No. 1”).<sup>5</sup> Although ACOG did not provide a rationale, this was fully consistent with

terminology changes advocated at the time by proponents of abortifacient birth control (ACOP, “When Human Life Begins”; Sosnowski, “Pursuit of Excellence”).<sup>6</sup> Such confounding of the definition of “conception” as well as “pregnancy” has persisted. For example, the 2005 *Merriam-Webster’s Medical Desk Dictionary* defines “conception” as “the process of becoming pregnant involving fertilization or implantation or both.”<sup>7</sup> The ambiguity of this definition (with the authors unwilling to decide between cases separated by “or”) makes it weak scientifically and medically, and lends itself to confusion and error about when a conceived child exists. To be clear, in the case of in vitro fertilization, pregnancy indeed begins with implantation and not conception. But otherwise, conception is the point at which a new human life exists in the mother’s womb, regardless of whether the mother has begun to undergo the biological changes associated with implantation.

The late Dr. J. C. Willke, MD, identifies this “redefinition of the terms used,” as “misinformation,” saying, “This has fooled untold numbers of people, including many doctors. But we are not talking about the mother’s body. It is quite obvious that life does not begin when this new human life is one week old. Life begins when the sperm penetrates the ovum” (Willke & Mattes, “Dispelling the Myths”).<sup>8</sup> The resulting confusion is evident in a 2008–2009 survey of U.S. obstetricians and gynecologists: while most respondents (57%) acknowledge that pregnancy begins at conception, 28% said it begins at implantation, and 16% were unsure (Chung et. al., “Obstetrician-Gynecologists”).<sup>9</sup>

**3. Conception, Implantation, and Whether Contraceptives Cause Early Abortions.** In 2010, Dr. Willke wrote an exceptionally helpful article, “Dispelling the Myths,” explaining in simple terms the process of fertilization, conception, and implantation; and then he and Bradley Mattes did short reviews of many types of contraceptives, revealing which ones are likely to cause early unknown abortions. Dr. Willke and Brad founded the Life Issue Institute together in 1991. I encourage you to READ THE ARTICLE: <https://www.lifeissues.org/2010/02/dispelling-the-myths/>

One of the most revealing and fascinating aspects was the effect of chemicals from contraceptives on the lining in the mother’s womb. For successful implantation of a fertilized embryo, the mother’s body by design richly prepares the lining of her womb to receive and enable the embryo to attach. But many contraceptive drugs, like abortifacient drugs, change the lining of the womb and make it hostile to the embryo, which can prevent implantation and result in the death of a conceived child.

SDG and for the sanctity of human life,

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- <sup>1</sup> Noah Webster's *First Edition of an American Dictionary of the English Language* (1828). Republished in facsimile edition. Foundation for American Christian Education: San Francisco, CA, 1983.
- <sup>2</sup> Walton, John, and Jeremiah A. Barondess and Stephen Lock, eds. *The Oxford Medical Companion*. Oxford University Press: Oxford, New York, Tokyo, 1994.
- <sup>3</sup> *Mosby's Medical Dictionary*, 8<sup>th</sup> Edition. Mosby Elsevier: St. Louis, MO, 2009.
- <sup>4</sup> Human Life International, "Abortifacients—HLI Educational Series." Human Life International, 2012 [www.hli.org/resources/abortifacients/](http://www.hli.org/resources/abortifacients/).
- <sup>5</sup> American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology. "Terminology Bulletin No. 1: Terms Used in Reference to the Fetus." The College, Chicago, IL, 1965; as quoted by American College of Pediatricians, "When Human Life Begins" (see next endnote).
- <sup>6</sup> American College of Pediatricians. "When Human Life Begins." American College of Pediatricians, March 2017, [www.acped.org/the-college-speaks/position-statements/life-issues/when-human-life-begins](http://www.acped.org/the-college-speaks/position-statements/life-issues/when-human-life-begins); Sosnowski, J. Richard. "The Pursuit of Excellence: Have We Apprehended and Comprehended It?" *American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology*, 1984, 150(2):115-117.
- <sup>7</sup> *Merriam-Webster's Medical Desk Dictionary*. Merriam-Webster, Inc.: Springfield, MA, 2005, [www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/conception](http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/conception).
- <sup>8</sup> Willke, John C., and Bradley Mattes. "Dispelling the Myths." Life Issues Institute, 1 February 2010, [www.lifeissues.org/2010/02/dispelling-the-myths/](http://www.lifeissues.org/2010/02/dispelling-the-myths/).
- <sup>9</sup> Chung, G. S., R. E. Lawrence, K. A. Rasinski, J. D. Yoon, and F. A. Curlin. "Obstetrician-Gynecologists' Beliefs About When Pregnancy Begins." *American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology*, 2012, 206:132.e1-7.