

Trying to scare young girls

Anti-abortion protest relies on misleading images

At 12 weeks, a fetus is 6 cm from crown to rump.

At 12 weeks, the fetus has not yet moved. Many cultures believe that when a fetus first moves that is the sign it has become a living being; the first spark of life has filled it. Before that, it's only a potential life form.

Most abortions take place well before the 12-week mark. Sudbury Regional Hospital, and other hospitals and clinics like it across the country, only perform terminations that are 12 weeks or less. In many instances, the fetus is smaller than the head of a thumb tack.

Last week, an anti-abortion group demonstrated outside Sudbury Secondary School with horrific depictions of fetuses blown up and mounted on billboards about the size of a full-grown adult. One looked like a baby that had its head torn off.

From the U.S.

Kelly Reilly, manager of clinical services at the Sudbury District Health Unit, said it's likely the group got its pictures from the United States where, at some clin-



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SHE SAYS

ics, abortions are performed as late as 24 weeks. The baby with its head torn off is probably one of those aborted 24-week-olds.

Pregnancy counseling

The health unit offers "comprehensive pregnancy counselling," says Reilly, including free pregnancy tests, prenatal programs, information on adoption, as well as a consultation with a physician about terminations. Its mandate is to provide women with an "informed choice."

Obviously the "Pro-Life" anti-abortion group has no such mandate.

I left messages with the local Pro-

Life group, but none of them returned my phone calls, so I can't say for certain whether they are deliberately spreading misinformation.

But make no mistake, the pictures on their signs bear no relation whatsoever to terminations performed in Canada.

As for picketing the high school, I guess they haven't read up on the abortion demographics. The group with the highest abortion rate is the 20- to 24-year-olds, not the 16- to 19-year-olds.

So next time, try setting up camp outside Cambrian College, College Boreal or Laurentian University, and leave the high school and elementary students (the demonstration was held outside an elementary school as well) alone.

As for Northern Ontario, we're lagging far behind the rest of the province when it comes to our abortion rate. In 1998, 4.9 women (aged 15-49) per 1,000 pregnancies had a pregnancy terminated. Compare that statistic with the provincial average of 15.4 and Toronto's at 21.8.

And don't think for a minute that the women in Toronto are more

promiscuous and less concerned with employing birth control measures (which have been known to sometimes fail). They simply have better access to abortions and are afforded the anonymity that comes from living in a big city when they have the procedure done.

Many go to Toronto

Reilly said many women from the Sudbury area choose to have their abortion done in Toronto because they don't want anyone they know to find out.

Why the girl who has to make the trek from Chapeau or other small towns within the Sudbury health unit's reach to our brave metropolitan No wonder that the most-vulnerable group of women, the 15- to 19-year-olds, have a lower representation. It would be near impossible for a teen from a small town to arrange for the first consultation, never mind the follow-up surgery, without family and friends finding out.

While I do not advocate abortion as a method of birth control, I believe it is a viable last resort for women who feel they aren't ready to have a child. Pregnancy, while a

wonderful and miraculous state, shouldn't be forced on anyone. It's a long and life-transforming ride.

Recently a study has come out, linking the dramatic drop in the crime rate across the United States throughout the 1990s with the legalization of abortion, two decades before.

John Donohue, who published his findings in the Harvard Quarterly Journal of Economics, found the crime rate dropped exactly 18 years after the U.S. Supreme Court legalized abortion with the Roe versus Wade decision.

Donohue said it makes sense because a large proportion of women in "rather difficult circumstances" have abortions and that "unwanted kids tend to have had life outcomes" involving crime.

He credits half of the crime drop to access to abortion.

Communities in Northern Ontario need more access to abortion, not more demonstrators trying to scare young girls with blatantly inaccurate materials.

Read Lara Bradley's She Says every Friday in The Sudbury Star.