

Editor's Note

Franklin E. Payne, Jr., M.D.

Marlene Cimons of the Los Angeles Times recently reported the story of a Texas Baptist pastor and his wife who obtained a fetal liver tissue transplant for their unborn child. The tissue was obtained from the aborted fetus of a tubal pregnancy and injected into the recipient while he was still in the womb. The unborn infant was found through prenatal genetic testing to be affected by Mucopolysaccharidosis, which is inherited and inevitably fatal in childhood. The parents are quoted as stating that they are opposed to abortion. It is hoped that the experimental procedure may alter their child's dismal prognosis, but it is not yet known that it will.

Christians who have been content to comprehend their position as merely "pro-life" are likely to be presented with more and more hard cases challenging the attractive simplicity of that view. These parents were obviously acting in favor of the life of their unborn child in obtaining the transplant, though one wonders why they consented to prenatal testing prior to knowledge of a possible treatment, as the reporter relates happened. Viewed in a broader perspective, however, was this transplant decision truly "pro-life?"

Letters to the editor

Dear JBEM:

I enjoy the Journal very much. The article, "Medical Services - Our Stewardship by W. Crenshaw, M.D., [Vol. 4, No. 4] was something I am pondering at this time.

My son has an aneurysm of the pulmonary artery as a result of corrective surgery for Tetralogy of Fallot as well as a leaking pulmonary valve. Last April our cardiologist seemed in a big hurry to speed in with surgery. Then, in August, I brought my son in with fatigue and another cardiologist saw him. This one stated that the child "would not drop dead" and that surgery is not "to save his life" but to give a "better quality" of life. The surgery has not yet been booked and I am having second thoughts about it all. The child (11 years old) is terrified of surgery, especially due to past traumas, but he says he is not so afraid of dying. I am wondering why the M.D.'s seemed of such opposite opinions and if there are things I am not being told.

There is sort of a little panic here that seeps into the papers now and then of parents fearful surgery will be

delayed too long for their children. Some of the M.D.'s and the secretaries on the phone are downright snarly. Some nurses make hints that parents should petition government for more funds (socialized medicine here). [The writer lives in Canada. - ed.]

I do not want my child used as a pawn to get more money out of government. I want God's will done and I want to know it. I don't want the doctors to think they are the "saviour" because I'm sure some parents are pleading with them. Of course, I don't want my son to die. I don't want him to go through a horrible experience and I don't want a problem with surgery ruining his life. ... Deciding to step back and pray some more, I have postponed our next appointment to better prepare us for the next one. God holds us in His hands....

Sincerely,

Name withheld by request

Editor's note: Since this letter the child has had the surgery and is doing well.