

PHYSICIANS FOR



REPRODUCTIVE  
CHOICE AND HEALTH

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\*As of December 2008

Jodi Magee  
*Executive Director*

January 26, 2010

Nina Tassler  
President  
CBS Entertainment  
51 W. 52nd St.  
New York, NY 10019

Dear Ms. Tassler:

I am the chairwoman of Physicians for Reproductive Choice and Health, a national nonprofit network of doctors, medical students, and other members of the public.

When the news broke that CBS would air a commercial from Focus on the Family during the Super Bowl, I heard from many outraged colleagues around the country. We ask that you pull the ad. To run it is to mislead the public about the serious medical conditions that can complicate pregnancy. Pam Tebow, the mother of college football star Tim Tebow, might not have followed her doctor's advice when she was pregnant, but that doesn't mean that every other woman with a wanted but risky pregnancy should do the same.

As physicians, we have treated women who did what Ms. Tebow did but with very different results, patients whose doctors explained that their pregnancies posed a severe health risk to the fetus or the mother but decided to take a chance. These women didn't end up with Heisman trophy winners. Many of them died, leaving behind children and spouses. Others delivered stillborns. Still others gave birth to infants whose bodies were not equipped for life outside the womb.

It is highly irresponsible of Focus on the Family to suggest that pregnant women will be rewarded with healthy children if they dismiss their doctors' advice. We can't help but think that you wouldn't broadcast the Focus on the Family ad if it advised cancer patients to shrug off what their physicians recommend. In fact, the commercial does just that—women who are pregnant and are diagnosed with breast cancer, for example, often have to choose between chemotherapy or radiation and having the baby.

Focus on the Family has one message: women should sacrifice their health and the health of their fetuses rather than terminate a pregnancy. To advance its anti-abortion agenda, this organization dismisses out of hand the many things that can go wrong with a pregnancy, no matter how much love and prayer go into it. As physicians, we have had to inform hopeful pregnant women that their fetuses were in terrible trouble, developing without brains, failing to grow kidneys, or otherwise at risk of death upon delivery or a brief life of torment. It is up to each family to decide what course to take in this horrendous situation. Each case has

different considerations; there are no simple answers, medically or emotionally. An ad that celebrates Pam Tebow as a role model for other pregnant women is an ad that tells the many families who made different choices for their own reasons that they were wrong to do so.

The Tebows' personal story, moving as it is, does not apply to anyone other than the Tebows. To suggest otherwise is a cruel trick to play on American families facing heart-wrenching dilemmas.

By broadcasting the Focus on the Family commercial, you would not only hurt CBS's reputation as the fair, fact-based network behind *60 Minutes*, but you would ignore the large sector of viewers who have had abortions or supported their wives', girlfriends', sisters', and daughters' decisions to end a pregnancy. One in three women in the United States has had an abortion. They'll be watching on February 7, and so will the people who care about them. As they cheer on their teams and pass the chips, these families do not deserve to be scolded for one of the most difficult decisions they've ever had to make.

Because of the stigma surrounding abortion, many people are not aware of the facts. We would be glad to answer any questions you may have about the procedure, the people who perform it, or the patients who have it.

In the meantime, please don't spoil the Super Bowl with an irresponsible message calculated to undermine the practice of medicine.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Suzanne Poppema MD". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the typed name.

Suzanne Poppema, MD  
Chair, Board of Directors