

Conscientious Commitment

A GP's Perspective

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Thank you!

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has”

Margaret Mead



Why?

Hippocrates

- * Greek Physician
- * Father of Medicine
- * 2400 years ago

Hippocrates

“I will neither give a deadly drug to anybody who asked for it, nor will I make a suggestion to this effect.

Similarly I will not give to a woman an abortive remedy. In purity and holiness I will guard my life and my art”

How?

Summary of last 6 months

- * Referendum announced 28th March
- * Referendum date May 25th
- * GP led abortion service proposed
- * ICGP engaged with DOH
- * GP Buddy Survey early June
- * NAGP EGM early June
- * Joint Committee on Health Meeting 19th Sept
- * Abortion legislation approved by Cabinet 27th Sept
- * Bill to be introduced to Dáil next week

Key elements

- * Govt charged with provision of abortion services and proposing GP led
- * GPs not being fairly represented by ICGP

Key elements

- * Vast majority of GPs do not want to engage in service....75-85%
- * Majority of GPs have CO to abortion...just over 50%

Key elements

- * True CO are not a small number...>500
- * GPs who want to engage in service likely less than 300

Key elements

- * Conscientious Objection Clause in legislation is severely flawed
- * “Preventing access” argument does not stack up
- * Ulterior motive

POSITION PAPER

on

**Provision of Termination of Pregnancy & enhanced Reproductive Care within
the existing General Practice & Maternity Hospital setting.**

Start



**Southern
Taskgroup on
Abortion &
Reproductive
Topics**

ADDENDUM

Addressing Medical Professionals' Refusals to Provide Abortion Care on Grounds of Conscience or Religion:

It is incumbent on the State to ensure that abortion healthcare is accessible in practice and that pregnant people have timely and effective access to legal abortion care in Ireland.

If the Irish State is to allow doctors to refuse to provide abortion care, we are concerned that such refusals may jeopardise health and well-being, hinder timely access to abortion services, reinforce stigma and lead to discrimination against marginalized groups.

A number of human rights mechanisms have stressed that, if refusals are to be permitted, the state must establish and implement an effective regulatory, oversight and enforcement framework to guarantee that these refusals do not obstruct a person's access to legal reproductive healthcare in practice.

It is clear, that in a system which allows doctors to refuse to provide abortion care, the following obligations will fall to the State:

1. Assurance of a functioning abortion service by ensuring the adequate availability and dispersal of willing providers. It is possible that access to abortion care will be compromised in areas with a high prevalence of objection. We believe that doctors are more likely to provide if the service is safe, well resourced, and clinical guidelines with clear referral pathways are in place.
2. Ensure access for pregnant people by mandating that objecting doctors refer to an alternative accessible and willing provider. This is in-keeping with current Medical Council Guidelines.
3. If conscientious objection is to be permitted it must pertain to individuals only. Institutional refusal of care should not be permitted.
4. Impose clear limits on the legality of refusals. Doctors who refuse to provide abortion care should be forthright about their objection. They should provide treatment in medically urgent situations.
5. Implement adequate monitoring to ensure compliance with relevant regulation. The primary objectives of these measures should be to steadily reduce the number of objectors.

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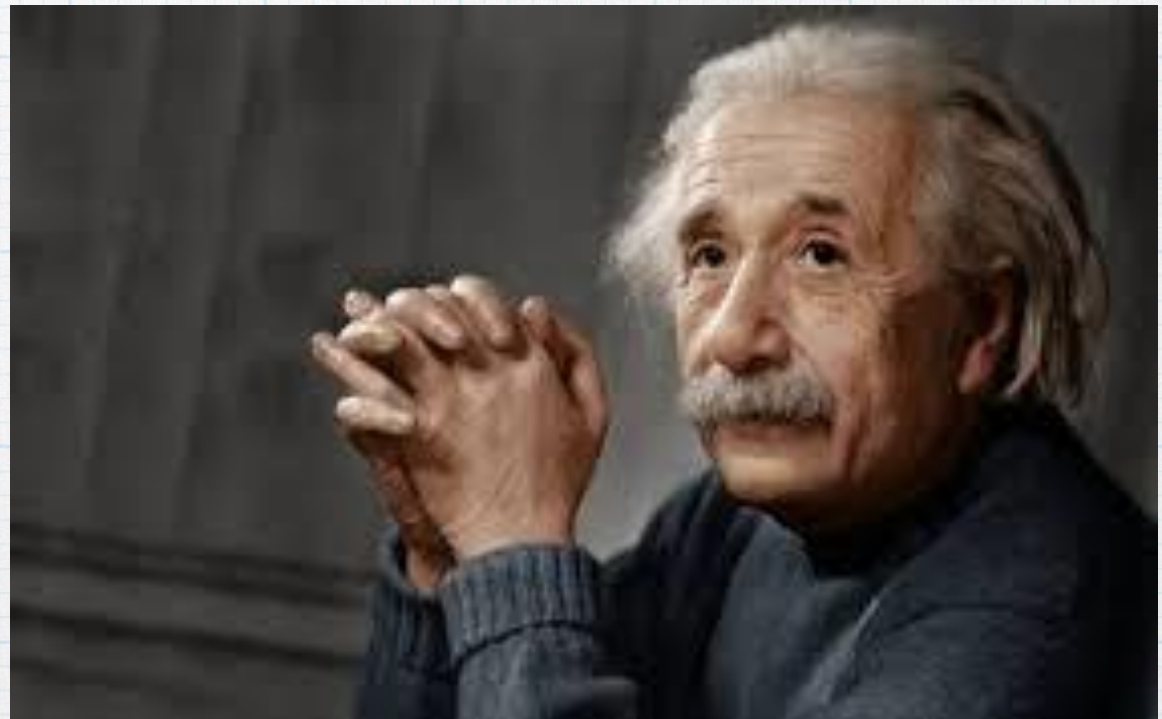
What is
Conscience?

Conscience

- * Person's moral sense of right and wrong
- * Guide to one's behaviour
- * Essence of freedom of expression
- * Essential element of a free society

“Conscience
supersedes the
authority of the law of
the state”

Albert Einstein



Conscientious Objection History

- * Sweden, Finland, Bulgaria and Iceland
- * European Parliament resolution narrowly defeated 2013

Reframing the argument

- * Legal vs Ethical
- * Guidelines versus Tramlines
- * Conscientious Commitment
- * 2 patient model of care

Reframing the argument

- * Complicit by referral
- * Pro Choice Pluralistic Society
- * Threat of a custodial sentence
- * Gatekeepers not shopkeepers!

What now?

Plan of action

- * Lobby Politicians
- * Lobby ICGP
- * Lobby NAGP

Plan of action

- * Petition Letter for all HCP + Admin Staff
- * Engage with public via media
- * Resistance
- * Legal Challenge

“The only thing
necessary for the
triumph of evil is for
good men to do
nothing”

Edmund Burke



“Our lives begin to
end the day we
become silent about
things that matter”

Martin Luther King Jnr



“You may be 38 years old, as I happen to be. And one day, some great opportunity stands before you and calls you to stand up for some great principle, some great cause. And you refuse to do it because you are afraid....You are afraid that you will lose your job, or you are afraid that you will be criticised or that you will lose your popularity, or you’re afraid that somebody will stab you, or shoot at you or bomb your house, so you refuse to take a stand.

Well, you may go on and live to 90, but you’re as dead at 38 as you would be at 90. And the cessation of breathing in your life is but the belated announcement of an earlier death of the spirit”



Martin Luther King Jnr

THANK YOU

