Response to original article:

Effects of Carrying an Unwanted Pregnancy to Term on Women’s Existing Children

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In the October 2018 edition of The Journal of Pediatrics Foster et al authored an article purporting to demonstrate that it is unjust to older siblings to prevent their mother from aborting their unborn sibling. The objective was to compare the children of mothers who sought late term abortion and were denied the abortion with children of mothers who were not denied a late term abortion. The authors found that mothers who aborted were likely to be more financially secure and to have children who were developmentally ahead of children whose mothers were denied an abortion. They interpret these observations in a way to justify late term abortion as a pro-child and pro-family medical intervention.

There were two primary endpoints reported. The first was the developmental score for the child that was already born at the time that the abortion was sought compared to the developmental score of the child whose younger sibling was aborted. The second endpoint was the odds ratio of being below the poverty level at time of data collection. This data was collected from 6 months to 4.5 years after the mothers sought abortions.

The developmental screen used was the Parents’ Evaluation of Developmental Status: Developmental Milestones (PEDS:DM). There are two problems with this reported data. First, the PEDS:DM is a screening tool not a diagnostic tool. It is subjective and relies on parental report of the parents’ concerns and observations. They are comparing mothers’ concerns for an older sibling (that has a younger sibling) with mothers’ concerns about their youngest child, which might be their only child. This is not a properly controlled comparison. They needed to compare PEDS:DM on an older child who has a younger sibling that mother never wanted to abort vs PEDS:DM on an older child who has a younger sibling that mother wanted to abort but was prevented due to late term presentation to abortion provider. This would be the proper control.

The second problem with this reported data outcome is its confidence intervals. The children of mothers denied abortion and having a younger sibling had lower scores on their PEDS:DM screen but the confidence intervals for this were -0.07 to 0.00. If the confidence interval passes through 0, there is no statistical difference between the data sets. There is just not enough evidence to say that the PEDS:DM between these two groups is different so I reject the conclusion that the development of older siblings of women who wanted to abort the younger sibling is compromised.

The second outcome is the odds ratio of living below the poverty level. This outcome seems rather obvious. Children cost families and societies money. Having one extra child costs more than having one less child. If women who seek abortions are more
likely to have an income near the poverty level, those with one extra child are more likely have an income below the poverty level.

The article by Foster should be rejected as contributing to valuable medical research because its final analysis is that children can be materialistically quantified and eliminated with the goal of saving money.