

BIOGRAPHY

WARREN M. HERN, M.D., M.P.H., PH.D, DIRECTOR

Dr. Warren Hern, Director of the Boulder Abortion Clinic, is a public health physician with over 35 years of experience with women's health issues. His awareness of the need for safe abortion services and advocacy of reproductive choice began during his experience as a medical student in Colorado and during his service as a Peace Corps physician in Brazil (1966-68). He was especially moved by the suffering of large numbers of Latin American women who were dying of illegal abortion. Their dilemma was similar to those Dr. Hern observed in American women as a medical student at the University of Colorado School of Medicine (M.D., 1965), during his work in the Peruvian Amazon as a third-year medical student (1964), and during his internship at Gorgas Hospital in the Canal Zone (1965-66).

After returning to the United States from Brazil in 1968, Dr. Hern studied epidemiology at the University of North Carolina School of Public Health in Chapel Hill, during which time he concentrated on the relationships between fertility, health, and reproductive decisions. He was especially interested in the epidemiology of induced abortion in Latin America.

Following course work for his Master of Public Health degree at the University of North Carolina (1968-70), Dr. Hern was invited to become an official in the U.S. government's first family planning program for the poor, administered within the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) - The "War On Poverty" as the Johnson Administration had called it. His official title was Chief, Program Development and Evaluation Branch, Family Planning Division, Office of Health Affairs, OEO, Executive Office of the President. His job was to help set priorities for the family planning program (annual budget: \$24 million), design programs, and evaluate them. In this capacity, he played a key role in providing federal funding for Rocky Mountain Planned Parenthood to set up a statewide family planning program for poor women in Colorado.

Among the policy issues addressed by Dr. Hern and his colleagues at OEO was the use of US government funds for abortion and voluntary sterilization programs. Dr. Hern was instrumental in changing the government policies to permit the use of funds for voluntary sterilization services for those who wanted and needed them but could not afford them. He also prepared and fought for regulations that would protect poor people from sterilization abuse. White House suppression of his sterilization guidelines resulted in his conscientious resignation from his government office in June 1972. He testified about the harmful effects of the Nixon Administration suppression of these guidelines before the Senate Subcommittee on Health, Education and Welfare chaired by Senator Ted Kennedy in July 1973.

During his time in Washington, Dr. Hern was keenly interested in the developing efforts for the legalization of abortion. He attended oral arguments before the U.S. Supreme Court in *Vuitch* (the first abortion case to reach the Supreme Court), and the first oral arguments for *Roe vs. Wade* and its companion case, *Doe vs. Bolton*. He was active in citizen's groups such as the National Association for the Repeal of Abortion Laws (NARAL) working for the legalization of abortion. His writings in national publications were reprinted and used by organizations such as the Association for the Study of Abortion. It was during this time (1971-72) that he learned to perform abortions at PRETERM Clinic, the first non-profit abortion clinic in the nation's capitol. Before leaving Washington, Dr. Hern performed abortions while conducting a management study at PRETERM. The results of this study appeared in *Human Organization*, the journal of the Society for Applied Anthropology, in 1976.

After working as a consultant briefly in Washington, D.C. and Latin America, Dr. Hern returned home to Colorado in the summer of 1972. That fall, in November 1972, Dr. Hern's article, "The Politics of Abortion" appeared in *The Progressive* magazine. This followed several of Dr. Hern's articles on abortion, sterilization, and family planning that had appeared in the *American Journal of Public Health*, *Family Planning Perspectives*, and *The New Republic*.

Shortly after the *Roe vs. Wade* decision was handed down, an editor of The Denver Post asked Dr. Hern to prepare a lengthy article interpreting the *Roe* decision and its implications for Colorado citizens. Partly as a consequence of these writings, he was asked in the spring of 1973 to help start a non-profit abortion clinic in Boulder, Colorado. This clinic became Colorado's first freestanding non-profit abortion facility. Dr. Hern and the clinic came under concerted and sustained attack by anti-abortion fanatics and by some members of the medical community.

Within weeks after the clinic was opened with Dr. Hern as Medical Director, he became one of the chief defenders of abortion rights and reproductive freedom in Colorado. He defended these freedoms not only with his own day-to-day work but also in many public speeches, debates, lectures, and media appearances. In November 1974, he presented his first clinical paper on abortion services, a series of over 1000 first-trimester abortions without a single uterine perforation, at the American Public Health Association meeting. The series emphasized the use of laminaria, medically prepared seaweed, which added safety in dilation of the cervix prior to abortion.

In January 1975, Dr. Hern founded his own private medical practice, specializing in outpatient abortion, in Boulder - the Boulder Abortion Clinic. Since that time, he has concentrated on providing the highest quality abortion services possible, with primary emphasis on patient safety and on individual emotional and social support. In numerous clinical studies conducted by Dr. Hern and

published in the best peer-review journals, including *Obstetrics and Gynecology*, the *American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology*, and the *International Journal of Gynecology and Obstetrics*, the major complication rates are in the range of 0.1 - 0.3% (1-3 per 1000) - the lowest in the medical literature concerning abortion statistics and complication rates.

In 1976, Dr. Hern organized and co-chaired the Western Regional Conference on Abortion. This national meeting, with leading experts on abortion from various fields, was the first national meeting on the subject held since 1971. The proceedings of this historic meeting, including presentations, photographs, and discussions, were published in 1977 as *Abortion In The Seventies*, with Dr. Hern as senior editor.

In subsequent years, Dr. Hern's publications included dozens of scientific and professional papers concerning abortion and other aspects of fertility control. These include reports of his research among the Shipibo Indians of the Peruvian Amazon Basin, which he began in 1964. That research was the basis for his Ph.D. in Epidemiology, which he received from the University of North Carolina in 1988.

In 1984, J.B. Lippincott Company published Dr. Hern's medical textbook, *Abortion Practice*. This was the first single-author medical textbook on the subject of abortion, and it has remained a standard work in the field since that date. Because of anti-abortion threats and harassment, Lippincott took the book out of print in 1989 and destroyed several hundred copies of the hardcover book. Dr. Hern subsequently obtained the copyright, formed a publishing company (Alpenglo Graphics), and published a soft cover edition of *Abortion Practice* in order to keep the book in print and available to those who need it. Instructions for ordering this valuable text are included elsewhere in this website.

In 1975, Dr. Hern began developing a technique for performing early second trimester abortions on an outpatient basis - an important innovation. His first paper on this subject, "Multiple laminaria treatment in early midtrimester outpatient suction abortion," was the first paper on this subject in the American literature. It was published in *Advances in Planned Parenthood* in 1977. Since then, the serial multiple laminaria technique described by Dr. Hern has become the procedure of choice in second trimester abortion.

In 1976, Dr. Hern was one of the founding institutional members of the National Abortion Federation and served on its Board of Directors for four years. For the first two years of the organization's existence, Dr. Hern served on the Standards Committee and then chaired that Committee for two years. He prepared for publication the first version of the National Abortion Federation Program Standards for Abortion Services, released in 1981.

Following publication of *Abortion Practice* in 1984, Dr. Hern became a favorite target of anti-abortion fanatics such as Randall Terry, who prayed for Dr. Hern's "execution" during a demonstration in front of Boulder Abortion Clinic, and who publicly invited his followers to assassinate Dr. Hern during a broadcast on the National Christian Radio Broadcast Network in August, 1993.

In October 1985, just prior to a visit by Chicago anti-abortion fanatic Joseph Scheidler, a large stone was thrown through the front window of Dr. Hern's waiting room. Scheidler, a defrocked monk who heads the "Chicago Pro-Life [sic] Action League," was scheduled to speak at the University of Colorado and to demonstrate in front of the Boulder Abortion Clinic for several days. Author of *Closed: 99 Ways To Close An Abortion Clinic*, and advocate of anti-abortion harassment, he had stated several times on national television programs that he had "yet to shed a tear over the smoldering remains of an abortion clinic."

Dr. Hern had just returned from a medical meeting in Berlin, where he had presented two papers on second trimester abortion. After the conference, he was invited by a colleague to visit East Berlin. The tour included a brief stop at the Jewish Synagogue and Community House, which still showed the flame marks and other signs of Kristallnacht, the infamous November, 1938 night when Nazi goons broke out the windows of Jewish merchants and conducted a general assault on the Jewish community.

Three days after the stone came crashing through his window, and just prior to Mr. Scheidler's unwelcome visit, Dr. Hern placed a large, hand-written sign over the plywood covering the broken window - "THIS WINDOW WAS BROKEN BY THOSE WHO HATE FREEDOM." The sign was at Scheidler's back as he met the press that afternoon in front of Dr. Hern's office.

In February, 1988, following years of death threats, demonstrations, vandalism, and other forms of harassment, five shots were fired through the front window Dr. Hern's office. Two bullets narrowly missed one employee of Boulder Abortion Clinic. Dr. Hern's response, the next morning, was to hold a press conference on the front lawn in front of the windows showing the bullet holes and to offer a \$5,000 reward for information leading to the arrest and conviction of the person or persons who committed this crime. Four layers of bulletproof windows now protect the front of Boulder Abortion Clinic -and Dr. Hern's staff and patients.

Following continuing harassment in the fall of 1994, Dr. Hern obtained a restraining order in January 1995 against an anti-abortion fanatic who was stalking Dr. Hern to his home and issuing numerous death threats.

On January 22, 1995, the American Coalition of Life [sic] Activists held a press conference and announced a hit list of the first thirteen doctors they wanted eliminated. Dr. Hern was one of the thirteen abortion doctors targeted for elimination.

That afternoon, the US government put Dr. Hern under 24-hour armed guard by US federal marshals. This federal protection remained in place until July 1995, when appropriations for the program protecting physicians were withdrawn by the new anti-abortion Republican majority in Congress.

During this time, Dr. Hern continued to conduct and publish clinical research on abortion services. His research paper on late abortion, "Outpatient abortion for fetal anomaly and fetal death from 15-34 menstrual weeks' gestation: Techniques and clinical management," was published in *Obstetrics and Gynecology* in February 1993 (Vol. 81, pp. 301-306). A paper comparing two methods of cervical dilation in 1000 late abortion patients received the prize for "Best Scientific Paper" at 1993 and 1994 meetings, respectively, of the National Abortion Federation and the Association of Reproductive Health Professionals. The paper was published in *American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology* (Vol. 171:1324-28) in November 1994.

During the controversy surrounding the so-called "Partial Birth Abortion" debate, Dr. Hern was one of the experts in late abortion sought out by the national media for comment on this political strategy. At first invited to testify by the Minority Counsel and denied the opportunity to do so, Dr. Hern submitted testimony to the US Senate Judiciary Committee in November 1995 following the Committee's hearing held at that time. His editorials on the subject have appeared in *The Washington Post* (1996) and *The New York Times* (1997). In June 1996, he appeared on a special 60 Minutes program on the late abortion controversy. The next year, he was the target of Republican legislators and unsuccessful anti-abortion legislation in the 1997 session of the Colorado General Assembly.

Dr. Hern's efforts in behalf of reproductive freedom have been recognized and honored by the National Organization for Women, the Colorado chapter of the National Abortion Rights Action League, the Colorado Coalition for Choice, and the Colorado Women's Political Caucus. He was a featured speaker at a special event observing the 25th Anniversary of the Roe vs. Wade decision held in Denver and sponsored by the Colorado Coalition for Choice on January 22, 1998. In May 2002, Dr. Hern received the Christopher Tietze Humanitarian Award – its highest recognition – from the National Abortion Federation. In November 2002, Dr. Hern received the Carl S. Schulz Award from the Population, Family Planning and Reproductive Health Section of the American Public Health Association for his "outstanding contribution" to women's health and reproductive freedom. And in November 2003, Dr. Hern was given special recognition by Women's Health, for his contribution as founding Medical Director of Boulder Valley Clinic, Colorado's first private, non-profit outpatient abortion clinic in November 1973.