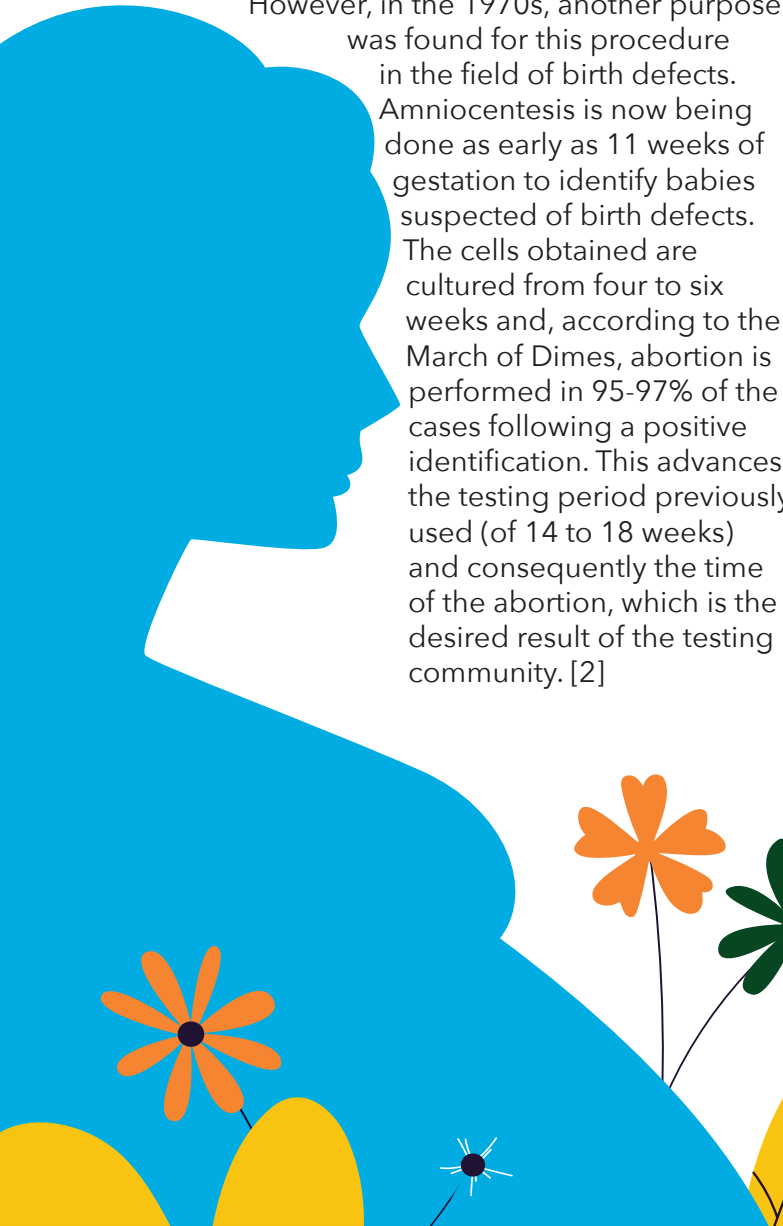




AMNIOCENTESIS: RIGHT TO LIFE – LIFESPAN POLICY STATEMENT

Adopted May 18, 1988; Amended March 31, 2014

In 1960, building on 20 years of research by scientists worldwide, Dr. I. W. Liley developed the process called amniocentesis. This contribution proved to be a step in treating the blood disease in newborns caused by the Rh factor which had occasioned the deaths of many babies shortly before, or soon after birth. In the procedure, a long needle is inserted in the mother's abdomen and amniotic fluid withdrawn which yields clues to the baby's condition. Four years later, Dr. Liley did a blood transfusion on a baby in utero which kept it alive for further treatment after birth. Now, for the most part, the Rh problem has been solved. [1]



However, in the 1970s, another purpose was found for this procedure in the field of birth defects. Amniocentesis is now being done as early as 11 weeks of gestation to identify babies suspected of birth defects. The cells obtained are cultured from four to six weeks and, according to the March of Dimes, abortion is performed in 95-97% of the cases following a positive identification. This advances the testing period previously used (of 14 to 18 weeks) and consequently the time of the abortion, which is the desired result of the testing community. [2]

This fact is further clarified by the "Medical Forum" of Harvard University Press, which says, "The main purpose of prenatal testing is to detect birth defects early enough to allow the pregnancy to be terminated." (*Emphasis ours*) The test also reveals the sex of the child, and increasingly expectant couples are aborting because the "undesired sex" (usually a girl) is present in the womb. [3]

Whenever this or any test can lead to treatment of a fetal problem within the womb, or prepare for early treatment after birth, Right to Life-LIFESPAN embraces it. And Right to Life-LIFESPAN always sympathizes with parents fearful of accepting a helpless or semi-helpless child. We can only beg that these be allowed to live, and many of our members will attest that their own lives and those of their families have been enriched by the presence of such as these. They point out that a child with special needs calls forth the best qualities in family members and touches them with a rare, unselfish grace.

It must also be said that the aggressive promotion of amniocentesis for birth defects carried on by the March of Dimes, the Federal Government, and the medical profession, is rapidly converting us to a society bent on eugenic perfection. This situation may be traced to the public conditioning of population alarmists who spread the "population bomb" rhetoric. Because, it is argued, if we have too many people already, how much less wanted and expensive are those with mental and physical defects.

We cannot forget that the Third Reich did not begin by killing Jews and political prisoners. It began by killing those with special needs, using "quality of life" and "compassion" language. [4]

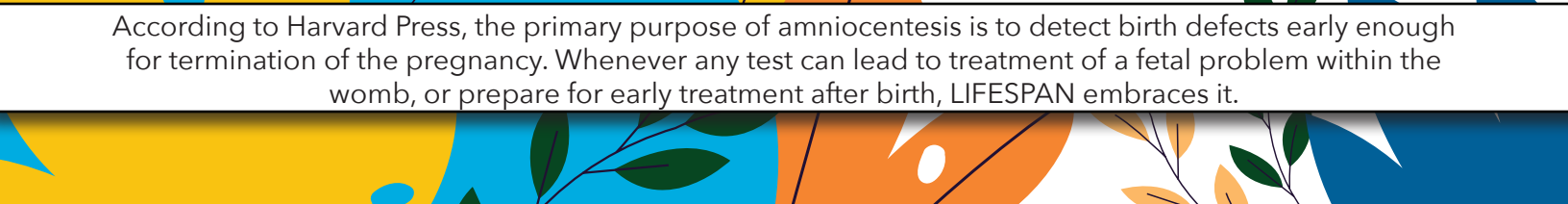
When an entire nation adopts the callous philosophy of death as a solution to physical and/or mental differences, it becomes bloodless and heartless and takes on the image that Rev. Richard John Neuhaus calls "The Naked Public Square."

[1] Zimmerman, David R., see "Rh - The Intimate History of a Disease and Its Conquest" (McMillan, New York, 1973).

[2] Medical World News, "Newsbriefs," Feb. 8, 1988, p. 64.

[3] Medical Forum, "Health Letter," Harvard Medical School, Harvard University Press, Dec. 1979.

[4] Wertham, Fredric, M.D., "A Sign for Cain," (McMillan and Co., N.Y., 1966)



According to Harvard Press, the primary purpose of amniocentesis is to detect birth defects early enough for termination of the pregnancy. Whenever any test can lead to treatment of a fetal problem within the womb, or prepare for early treatment after birth, LIFESPAN embraces it.