

# Group Sees Harm to Kids in Marriage Amendment

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A Constitutional amendment specifying that marriage should be between a man and a woman would be harmful to children being raised by gay or lesbian parents, members of a pediatricians' group said in testimony before a Senate subcommittee.

At a press conference prior to the October hearing convened by the Senate Subcommittee on the Constitution, Rodney Finalle, M.D., said, "Not only is there no evidence of harm to children based on parents being the same sex, but there is considerable evidence of the benefit that comes from the security and protection which is guaranteed with marriage. Civil marriage is the social institution that promotes healthy families by conferring a powerful set of rights, benefits, and protections not obtained by other means. There's no justification from separating this group of children from other children we've chosen to protect in this way."

Dr. Finalle, of the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, is a member of a group calling itself the Pro-Family Pediatricians. The group has nearly 1,000 signatures on a letter to Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist, M.D., (R-Tenn.) and House Speaker Dennis Hastert (R-Ill.) calling for the defeat of the amendment, known as the Marriage Protection Amendment.

The measure poses practical problems for nonbiological gay and lesbian parents

who want to visit a child in the hospital, said Ellen C. Perrin, M.D., director of the division of behavioral pediatrics at Tufts-New England Medical Center in Boston and honorary chair of Pro-Family Pediatricians. "Situations like this happen all the time, especially when the parent who is the legal parent may be out of town, is disabled, or has died," she said. "The child is left without a parent, even though he or she has—functionally—another parent. In terms of signing for emergency surgery,

the child has no legal parent who can speak for him or her."

The amendment also will not discourage gay and lesbian couples from having children, Dr. Perrin added. "Gay and lesbian people have been raising children for many years and will continue to do so."

Sen. Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.), ranking member of the Judiciary Committee, discouraged his colleagues from supporting the amendment. "As an American who has been married for 40 years, I am a great fan

of the institution of marriage," the senator said in a statement. "I believe it is important to encourage and to sanction committed relationships. ... It would be a sad day for our nation if we amended our founding document for the first time to specifically disfavor a group of Americans. I hope that those who claim to care about healthy families will turn away from wedge politics and scapegoating so we can focus" the issues piling up on Congress' agenda." ■

## Health IT Could Lead to Billions In Net Savings

The widespread implementation of electronic medical record systems by physicians could lead to \$142 billion in net savings over 15 years, according to a study from the Rand Corp.

And the implementation of hospital-based systems could mean a savings of \$371 billion over 15 years, according to the study, which was published in the September/October issue of Health Affairs.

"Our findings strongly suggest that it is time for the government and others who pay for health care to aggressively promote health information technology," Richard Hillestad, the Rand senior management scientist who led the study, said in a statement.

While the potential savings would outweigh the costs quickly during the adoption cycle, there are still a number of barriers to the effective adoption and application of health information technology, the researchers wrote. For instance, although providers would pay to implement the system, it's the payers and consumers who are likely to experience savings. In addition, even if the systems are widely adopted, interoperability and information exchange networks might not be developed, according to the study.

—Jennifer Lubell



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Please see brief summary on next page.

<sup>1</sup>Based on preclinical animal data and 30 pediatric patients with acute otitis media with tympanostomy tubes treated with ofloxacin otic and tested for audiometric parameters. No change in hearing function occurred in these patients.

References: 1. FLOXIN® Otic Prescribing Information. Daiichi Pharmaceutical Corporation: Montvale, NJ; April 2005. 2. Roland PS, Stewart MG, Hannley M, et al. Consensus panel on role of potentially ototoxic antibiotics for topical middle ear use: introduction, methodology, and recommendations. *Otolaryngol Head Neck Surg.* 2004;130(suppl):S51-S56. 3. Barlow DW, Duckert LG, Kreig CS, et al. Ototoxicity of topical otomicrobials agents. *Acta Otolaryngol (Stockh).* 1995;115:231-235. 4. Hannley MT, Denneny JC III, Holzer SS. Consensus panel report: use of ototopical antibiotics in treating 3 common ear diseases. *Otolaryngol Head Neck Surg.* 2000;122:934-940. 5. Matz G, Rybak L, Roland PS, et al. Ototoxicity of ototopical antibiotic drops in humans. *Otolaryngol Head Neck Surg.* 2004;130(suppl):S79-S82. 6. Daiichi Pharmaceutical Corporation, data on file, PRT 017.

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