

Abortion Doctor Says He Sets Up Adoptions

WICHITA, Kan. (AP) — Dr. George Tiller, whose reputation for performing late-term abortions attracts women to his clinic from across the United States, says he also has arranged dozens of adoptions.

However, Tiller told The Wichita Eagle, he provides the service only for adoptive couples who support abortion rights.

In an interview published Wednesday, Tiller said, "These patients come to us for care, and if we can't provide them with what they want, which is a termination of pregnancy, then we have an obligation as the final resource to offer to solve the problem."

Tiller, who performs about 3,000 abortions a year, always has said he performs elective abortions through the second trimester, or about 26 1/2 weeks, into pregnancy.

He said he performs abortions beyond that time only in cases of severe fetal abnormality. The women who come to him in the third trimester with healthy fetuses are the ones for whom he tries to arrange adoptions, he said.

Abortion opponents have maintained Til-

ler performs abortions on healthy fetuses up to the point of birth, and some were skeptical he arranges adoptions.

"I think if he did, it would just be kind of a ploy, because we know that he does up to 8 1/2-month abortions on totally, perfectly normal babies for no reason at all," said Donna Lippoldt, vice president of the Heartland Church Network.

Tiller's clinic was targeted by anti-abortion demonstrators in 1991, when Operation Rescue staged its "Summer of Mercy" protests.

In August, Tiller, 52, was shot and wounded in both arms as he drove away from his clinic. An Oregon woman, an anti-abortion activist, was charged with attempted first-degree murder. Tiller's wounds were minor, and he returned to work the next day.

Tiller said he began the adoption service in the late 1970s, when he was seeing 200 to 225 patients a week and performing about 50 early-term abor-

tions each week. He stopped the service when too many patients began seeing him just to have adoptions set up, he said.

In the mid-1980s — about the time he began performing late-term abortions — Tiller said he again started arranging adoptions. He estimated he has set up 50 to 70 adoptions and is now working on six adoptions.

The Eagle said that by arrangement with the birth mother, Tiller controls who may adopt the baby. A Wichita lawyer handles the legal arrangements. Tiller has strict criteria.

"Number one is you absolutely, unequivocally have to be pro-choice," he said. "And the reason for that is you cannot expect to benefit by a woman's problem if you are not dedicated to the proposition that she can solve her own problems; that she is confident to make those decisions.

"Anti-abortion folks never get the opportunity to adopt" through him, Tiller said.

His second criterion is, "I've got to know you, or you've got to be important to some of my friends who have supported our family and our goals for a long period of time," Tiller said.

Tiller said he makes little money from the adoptions.

"This is one of those

fun services," he said. "It helps me pay back in kind the people who have supported our program."

The adoptions don't come cheaply, however, to some adopting families.

A California couple spent \$14,000 adopting a baby girl through Tiller. The couple had been trying to have children for two years. The woman is a high school teacher whose mother works for Tiller.

The couple paid all the mother's medical and living expenses. They also had to travel from California to Wichita.