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JAMA Controversy Expands — Bias? What Bias?

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The controversy sparked by the *Journal of the American Medical Association* receives more attention today. JAMA published an [article](#) that reported on research claiming that fetuses feel no pain until at least the 29th week of gestation. [See [article below](#)] The journal failed to inform readers that two of the researchers were deeply involved in abortion — one directing an abortion clinic and the other serving as an attorney for NARAL.

The journal's defenders argue that the ties to the abortion industry have no bearing on the article or the research. *The Chicago Tribune* is out with an important article on the issue today. Here's my favorite paragraph from the article: "Dr. Philip Darney, chief of obstetrics, gynecology and reproductive sciences at San Francisco General Hospital, defended that decision, saying in a statement: "The research team does not believe that being an abortion provider is a conflict of interest." This statement is incredible. Does anyone really expect the authors to admit their bias?

More: *The San Francisco researchers "must have known there would be criticism from the right-to-life people," said Dr. Arnold Relman, former editor of the New England Journal of Medicine. "In a situation as contentious as this, it seems more disclosure should be the rule rather than less." Dr. Marcia Angell, a senior lecturer in social medicine at Harvard Medical School, is also a former editor of the New England Journal. "Suppose it were the other way," she said.*

"Suppose there were an article that said that [fetuses] do feel pain and it was written by people who were involved in the right-to-life movement. Would I want to know that? I think I would."

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