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Women and Medicine

As the weather finally breaks and we head into spring, we were happy to host our first in-person event this year on April 7: Women in Medicine Wine Night at the CLE Urban Winery in Cleveland Heights. We enjoyed gathering and recognizing the important women working in medicine in our region.

Our connection to the local advancement of women in medicine began in 1929, when the Women's Medical Society of Cleveland was founded and as part of the AMCNO, according to the *Encyclopedia of Cleveland History*.

We thought it was important, especially as we look toward our bicentennial in 2024, to bring back recognition of our female physicians. It is not only imperative that we recognize their contributions, but that we also do all we can to support the female patients *all* our physicians care for.

As you'll read on pages 12 and 13, the maternity mortality rate in our region and country is rising. Although medicine has come so far, so much progress still needs to be made in maternity care. We were proud to sponsor, through our foundation, a medical student-led pilot project in Akron (see page 12), which helped support expectant mothers in high-risk populations. And, AMEF Board Member Dr. Mary Frances Haerr continues her important work internationally by assisting OB/GYN fellows in Guyana (see page 6). Although I'm proud of the work we are doing in this space, and will continue to do to, I would be remiss not to acknowledge the dangerous risks to



AMCNO Executive Director Jen Johns (center) enjoys Wine Night with women physicians in the area, including Erinn Coe (right), who also serves on our Future Leaders Council.

women's health that will be coming from Columbus and Washington, as *Roe v. Wade* is expected to be overturned this summer by the U.S. Supreme Court.

Twenty-three states have laws that could be used to restrict the legal status of abortion when *Roe* is overturned, and 13 states have "trigger

laws," that immediately will go into effect. Ohio has pending legislation, HB 598, which would add Ohio to the list. If that happened, it would create a new crime in our state: criminal abortion, punishable as a fourth-degree felony, and up to 25 years in prison, for inducing an abortion through drugs or instruments. We at

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the AMCNO recently submitted testimony in opposition to HB 598. You can read it here: [https://amcno.org/assets/PDFs/HB 598 Opposition Testimony Isenberg.pdf](https://amcno.org/assets/PDFs/HB%20598%20Opposition%20Testimony%20Isenberg.pdf)

Legislative proposals across the nation would be just as dangerous. Some would immediately revoke the physician's medical license and charge civil fines of up to \$1 million. If these laws go into effect, we will be facing the most egregious assault on physicians and the physician-patient relationship in our lifetimes. Also of major concern in the medical community is the implications these statues could have on fertility treatments as well as ectopic pregnancies and other medical conditions suffered by pregnant women.

It is a cruel reality that in a time of staggering statistics on maternal mortality, the government is moving to further put the lives of pregnant women at risk. We must and will do all we can to protect physicians, the physician-patient relationship, and the health of our pregnant patients. And, above all, we must honor medicine's most essential oath and creed: first, do no harm.

Jen Johns, MPH
Executive Director, Academy of Medicine of Cleveland & Northern Ohio



From left to right: Host Committee Members Drs. Nancy Kurfess Johnson, Mary Frances Haerr, and Kristin Englund.



From left to right: AMCNO Members Drs. Michelle Marks, Rita Pappas and Vera Hupertz.



AMCNO Resident Board Member Dr. Jessica Tomazic (right) stands with some of her colleagues at the event.