

Pfizer blocks drugs for capital punishment but continues abortion pills

Written by Dr. Walter L. Taylor



Last month the drug manufacturer, Pfizer, stated that their company would begin blocking use of any of their drugs in cases of capital punishment. In choosing to do this, Pfizer has joined a growing list of drug companies taking this step. Pfizer's official statement included this comment, according to one new source I read: "Pfizer makes its products to enhance and save the lives of the patients we serve."

While the issue of capital punishment remains a controversial subject within the pro-life community, I think it safe to say that even one who is not opposed to capital punishment in principle can make a strong case that there is something problematic in the use of medical personnel and procedures in executions. This approach to the death penalty is troubling, inasmuch as it "sanitizes" the whole procedure, in a sense. An execution is an execution, and not a medical procedure, no matter how much it is "doctored up".

Yet, I was struck by the public comment of Pfizer. The company states that the products they make are "to enhance and save the lives of the patients we serve." Yet, while Pfizer sees the use of their drugs in execution as contradictory to their mission "to enhance and save the lives of patients," Pfizer nonetheless continues to produce drugs that are used in procuring abortions, from abortion pills to the drugs used in clinical abortion procedures. The contradiction between their public statement on the use of their drugs in executions and their continued production of abortion drugs is glaring. The unborn child, apparently, is not considered a "patient" by Pfizer.

Pfizer's statement also raises another related issue. If Pfizer judges that the use of their products in the administration of capital punishment is a misuse of their product, and if Pfizer is thus actually able to prevent their products being used in this way, then why is it that the same right afforded to a large pharmaceutical company is not afforded to bakers and photographers, among others, who likewise find that the use of their art and skill in the celebration of same-sex marriages is a misuse of their craft? Why should Pfizer get to make a moral determination about

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the use of their products, but the local butcher and baker and candlestick not be afforded the same right? One would hope that there is a more satisfying answer than the fact that large corporations have entire legal departments not afforded the small business person.

Have we reached a point in American life where a large company is allowed to live according to its conscience (even if it is inconsistent), and yet the individual is not?

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