



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Rape is Rape

Over the past few days, we have heard outrage from survivors and advocates across the country about the recent comments trivializing rape and questioning pregnancy resulting from rape. Jill Hertzendorf, MD, commented that "As a physician in the Emergency Room, I can assure you that pregnancy as a result of rape can and does occur. The body does not 'shut down' during rape. The risk of pregnancy is the same for consensual and nonconsensual sexual activity."

With more than 743,000 adult women in Ohio, 1 in 5 women and 1 in 71 men nationally who have been raped in their lifetime, the impact is far-reaching in every community. "On behalf of the Ohio Alliance to End Sexual Violence and to all the survivors reading this, we believe you," said Katie Hanna, Statewide Director. "It doesn't matter how you dressed, who you were or weren't with, what you did or didn't say or if you were drinking. Rape is rape."

"From the perspective of an advocate that is working with victims who became pregnant as a result of being raped, I am appalled that anyone could even make statements such as this," said Sandra Lyons, Victim Advocate at the Sexual Assault Help Center in Steubenville. "Pregnancy as a result of rape is a heart wrenching ordeal for the victim because not only do they have to work through the emotions surrounding being raped but, now they have to make decisions about a pregnancy resulting from being raped that will impact them for the rest of their lives. This is not a position that I would want to be put in and I have to give credit to the clients for their courage to be able to make the choices they have made and the courage they have exhibited in standing by their decisions," said Lyons. "Anyone making these types of comments should be ashamed of themselves. But, until we all stand up and say enough and this has to stop there will always be those who continue to perpetuate the myths that keep women and others from gaining the rights and justice they deserve when they become victims of rape."

Valorie Prulhiere, Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner and Manager at the DOVE Program in Akron, shared, "I have been a registered nurse for 32 years, a practicing Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) since 1997, and have personally cared for more than 900 victims of violence. The vast majority of my sexual assault patients have voiced concern over the possibility of pregnancy and infections from the assault, which can be as devastating to the victim as the assault itself. The worry about healthcare complications live on long after the actual assault. The likelihood that a pregnancy will result from a sexual assault is estimated to be 2 to 5 percent. In my experience, sexual assault patients are greatly concerned about pregnancy. Sexually transmitted infections, including HIV and hepatitis are also major concerns. Clearly sexual assault has long term, if not lifelong, healthcare concerns for every victim."

Support is available. To find out more information about getting support from your local rape crisis program in Ohio, please visit <http://www.oaev.org/support-by-county.html> or contact 1-888-886-8388.

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