Pregnancy Termination

Mrs. Tonyson and Her OB/GYN Disagree on Facts and Treatment

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Bioethics case study on reproduction and pregnancy.

Ms. Tonyson is a 32-year-old pregnant woman who visits her OB/GYN for a routine appointment. During the appointment, Dr. Seventh performs an ultrasound scan and states that the fetus is measuring too small to detect cardiac activity. Ms. Tonyson is adamant that the fetus is likely at 10 weeks gestation because she and her husband have not had sexual intercourse in over two months.

This news makes her extremely distressed because she was very excited to become a mother, but she understands that no detectable heartbeat at 10 weeks likely means the pregnancy is nonviable. Dr. Seventh explains that this could represent a missed miscarriage, but also maintains that the pregnancy may be earlier than Ms. Tonyson believes.

Ms. Tonyson requests that Dr. Seventh prescribe medication to end the pregnancy because she is confident that she is 10 weeks pregnant. However, Dr. Seventh refuses to prescribe the medication because he believes the pregnancy could possibly be earlier than estimated and wants Ms. Tonyson to wait two weeks and return for another scan. At that point, they can discuss options. Ms. Tonyson does not want to wait the two weeks; she believes she is experiencing a miscarriage and wants to begin grieving.

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