

A Preventable Delay: Cesarean Scar Ectopic Pregnancy Complicated by Restrictive Reproductive Policy

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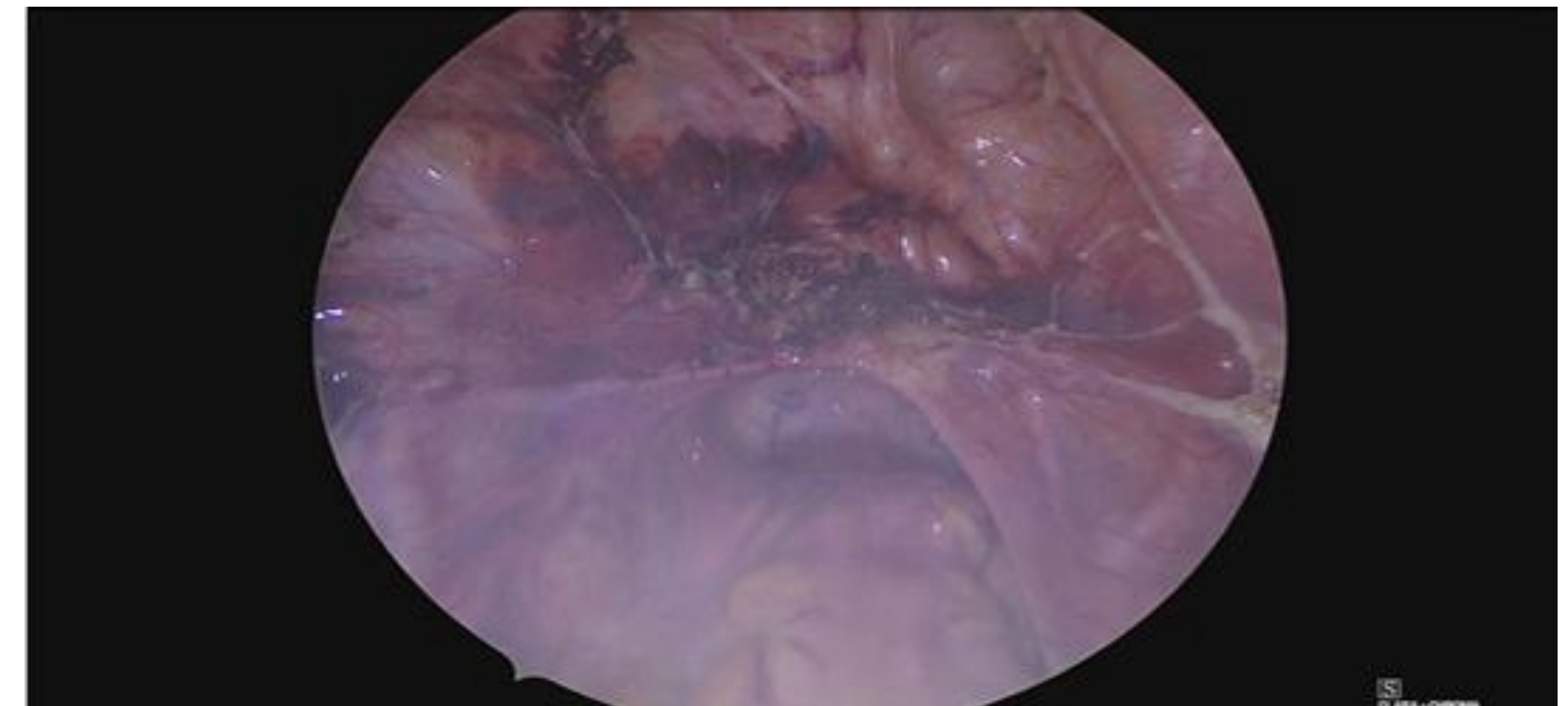
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Background

- Tennessee maintains some of the most restrictive reproductive laws in the United States
- With Dobbs v. Jackson, the termination of a pregnancy became criminal in the state of TN with no exceptions for ectopic or molar pregnancies
- In 2023, exceptions to abortion ban were passed and ectopic and molar pregnancies were legally defined as distinct from abortion care [1]
- Unclear guidelines create litigation concerns for physicians and result in delays in necessary obstetric intervention

The Case

- 27-year-old G5P1302 with history of CDx2 including one neonatal demise at 12w1d
- 8:30 PM: Presented to ED with acute onset lower abdominal pain and vaginal bleeding
- 12:30 AM: Ultrasound and bHCG levels consistent with early pregnancy loss in progress, with concern for dehiscence and hemorrhage at prior cesarean scar. OB/GYN consulted, patient clinically stable
- 8 AM: Patient taken to the OR as a STAT case. Diagnostic laparoscopy consistent with a cesarean scar ectopic pregnancy without frank uterine rupture
- Intraoperative: The team performed a laparoscopic supracervical hysterectomy. Post-operative surgical pathology confirmed placenta accreta spectrum grade 3a involving the cesarean scar.
- Postoperative: The patient remained hemodynamically stable and did not require transfusion. She was discharged on post-operative day 1



Teaching Points

- Delays between recognition of pathology and surgical intervention lead to significant morbidity and mortality
- Restrictions on abortion care and ambiguous “medical emergency” standards contribute to delays and denial of care to pregnant patients, even those with high-risk pregnancy complications
- Healthcare laws that allow physicians to offer all appropriate interventions are essential to improve outcomes for pregnant patients

References

1. Public Chapter 313, 113th Gen. Assemb., Reg. Sess., (Tenn. 2023). <https://publications.tnsosfiles.com/acts/113/pub/pc0313.pdf>