



# CHARITY WATCHLIST

## Mercy Ships



### STERILIZATION

- Under "Gynecological Procedures" it [offers the following](#) under its list of medical and surgical procedures:

*"Elective Sterilization (Tubal Ligation) In Conjunction with Planned Laparotomy Within The List Of Gynecologic Procedures Or With Unplanned Laparotomy, Doing It As The Secondary Procedure. See Policy 'Surgical Sterilization Guidelines for Women's Health Program' for further guidance in decision for sterilization"*

- ALL reached out to Mercy Ships and asked to see its sterilization guidelines since the link is not accessible on their website. Mercy Ships responded to our inquiry:

*This is a case-by-case basis option only if it is combined with the obstetric fistula repair surgery. It is based on the laws of the countries we serve in and following discussions with the patient and Hospital Chaplaincy to ensure understanding gained from the patient and husband/family. This is considered if –in the opinion of the visiting surgeon– the patient would be at a major health risk if she became pregnant again in the future.*

- Here are a few sources regarding Catholic teaching on sterilization and contraception to avoid life-threatening pregnancies:

*"Therefore, notwithstanding any subjectively right intention of those whose actions are prompted by the care or prevention of physical or mental illness which is foreseen or feared as a result of pregnancy, such sterilization remains absolutely forbidden according to the doctrine of the Church. And indeed the sterilization of the faculty itself is forbidden for an even graver reason than the sterilization of individual acts, since it induces a state of sterility in the person which is almost always irreversible."*

[Responses to Questions Concerning Sterilization in Catholic Hospitals](#)  
Vatican, 1975

*"Third, the CDF in 1993 applied the same moral reasoning to tubal ligation that it applied to hysterectomy, since tubal ligation entails 'the same end ... of averting the risks of a possible pregnancy.' As such, both hysterectomy and tubal ligation, when intended to prevent harms associated with possible future pregnancy, 'fall into the moral category of direct sterilization' and are thus not morally permissible."*

[Commentary on the CDF Responsum of December 10, 2018](#)  
National Catholic Bioethics Center

*"In addition, Natural Family Planning, which is highly effective (including for women with irregular ovulatory cycles), can be used indefinitely for a serious reason like avoiding a potentially life-threatening pregnancy, Pope St. Pope Paul VI affirmed in his encyclical Humanae Vitae (HV 10)."*

[Contraception Okay to Avoid Life Threatening Pregnancy?](#)  
Catholic Answers

- The Blue Chip Foundation is a US-based organization that works to "advance the United Nations' sustainable development goals (SDG)." The Blue Chip Foundation [granted Mercy Ships \\$1,000](#) for "[good health and well-being](#)." BCF states on its website that its grant to Mercy Ships' works aligns with the UN's SDG goal 3, which seeks to "ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages."

**Mercy Ships**  
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#### Mission

Operates a fleet of hospital ships by volunteer medical and non-medical crew to bring free surgeries to the poor.

#### Focus

medicine, surgery, orthopedics, emergency aid, dentistry, palliative care

However, the subsets following goal 3 which are in accordance with the UN, include the following:

*“3.7—By 2030, ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health-care services, including for family planning, information and education, and the integration of reproductive health into national strategies and programmes.”*

ALL emailed Mercy Ships about the Blue Chip Foundation’s claim on its website and asked if Mercy Ship currently provides, or plans to provide, reproductive services (including contraception and the abortion pill):

*“We do not perform abortions for our patients for any reason nor provide contraceptives or abortion pills. Our women’s procedures are limited to fistula repairs, specifically VVF (Vesicovaginal fistulas) procedures. Women in these countries often form these fistulas after particularly difficult childbirth or from simply having children too young. Left untreated this condition can cause a woman to be outcast from her society and even kicked out of her own home. Our mission is to bring hope and healing to these women so they may once again be whole.”*

ALL followed up with Mercy Ships to see if they are planning to provide abortion and contraception by 2030, as listed on Blue Chip Foundation’s website:

*“We are not. Some of our goals are not in alignment with the UN Sustainable Development Goals.”*

ALL also wrote to Mercy Ships for clarity regarding their relationship with Blue Chip Foundation:

*We are not part of the Blue Chip Foundation, this is a separate entity from Mercy Ships. The Blue Chip Foundation’s opinion states on its website that Mercy Ships work aligns with the following UN Sustainable Development Goals. This is not a statement from Mercy Ships, nor do we work with the UN to get funding for our programs. We do work with government officials and the Ministers of Health in the countries we are invited to serve in.*

Blue Chip Foundation has [given grants to other organizations](#) marked red on ALL’s Charity Watchlist for anti-life stances, as Special Olympics and World Wildlife Foundation

## NOTEWORTHY

- As part of their [code of conduct](#), Mercy Ships states the following:

*“Sexual Immorality—Mercy Ships will not tolerate any form of sexual harassment, pornography, or immoral act (defined as any sexual contact between individuals who are not a legally married man and woman).”*

- In a correspondence with ALL, Mercy Ships states the following:

*“[As a] Christian organization, our mission is to bring hope and healing to these women so they may once again be whole. We are pro-life.”*



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