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## **The Saga of antenatal corticosteroids and the ethics of unbound enthusiasm**

### **Abstract**

The principal therapeutic target of antenatal corticosteroids (ACS) is the fetal lung, but corticosteroids possess potent pleiotropic effects, thereby carrying the potential for iatrogenic, off-target consequences. A recent study using human neural organoids identified dexamethasone as an environmental factor capable of shifting neuronal developmental trajectory from an excitatory to an inhibitory pattern. Inhibitory neuronal preponderance in fetal neurodevelopment is critical to the pathogenesis of mental and neurodevelopmental disorders. Such reports added to extensive animal study findings and mounting epidemiological data support the conclusion that ACS can induce multisystem fetal changes with the potential to increase long-term health risks. Given the documented potential risks, we believe a compelling scientific and bioethical imperative exists to reconsider the current approach to ACS, with a heightened emphasis on judicious selection of patients and reduction in exposure magnitude. Beyond exercising prudence and adopting a more selective approach, clinicians have an ethical obligation to discuss potential long-term consequences with pregnant women. Risk-benefit discussions are particularly essential with late preterm gestational age ACS administrations.

### **Short Biography**

A native of Romania, **Prof. Alex Vidaeff** received his MD degree from the University of Bucharest in 1977. In 1983, he immigrated to the United States and resumed training in ob/gyn. He graduated from the ob/gyn residency at Temple University in Philadelphia in 1991 and subsequently moved to Boston. After 10 years as Clinical Instructor and then Assistant Professor at Harvard Medical School, he decided to complete a Maternal-Fetal Medicine fellowship at the University of Texas – Houston Medical School. In Houston he also obtained the Master of Public Health (MPH) degree at the University Of Texas School of



Public Health. Upon completion of his fellowship in 2003, he stayed on the faculty and moved up the academic ranks to full Professor of Ob/Gyn. In 2011, Dr. Vidaeff joined the faculty at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston, one of the most prominent medical schools in the United States.

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