

HEALTH

Many Clinics Use Genetic Diagnosis to Choose Sex

PART 1

Needle – procedure – gender – survey – beyond – surgical – womb – pregnancies – embryos - outside

MICHELE NORRIS, host:

From NPR News, this is ALL THINGS CONSIDERED. I'm Michele Norris.

And we continue now with our examination of pre-natal genetic testing. A growing number of doctors are pushing the ethical limits of the _____ called pre-implantation genetic diagnosis, or PGD.

Some say doctors are going _____ the edge of ethics. Some doctors analyze an embryo's DNA so parents can choose to have a male or female placed in the _____. Last year, a _____ found that one of every 11 PGDs was for gender selection alone. That study, by Johns Hopkins University, also found that 42 percent of clinics offering PGD offer it for _____ selection.

Lonny Shavelson reports.

LONNY SHAVELSON: At the Huntington Reproductive Center in Southern California, reproductive specialist Dr. Daniel Potter sits in front of a 32-year-old, anesthetized woman covered in _____ drapes.

Dr. DANIEL POTTER (Huntington Reproductive Center): And you can this _____ is fairly impressive.

SHAVELSON: He's extracting her eggs to be fertilized _____ her body, although she's capable of having a baby by natural means. She's asked him to analyze the chromosomes of her _____ and select only the males.

Dr. POTTER: Virtually 100 percent of those _____ will be the desired gender.

PART 2

Conceived – eggs – shouldn't – arranged – inherit – appreciate – unless – guarantee – financially – out

SHAVELSON: The American Society of Reproduction Medicine says PGD should be used only when there's a risk of genetic diseases, not just to select gender. Dr. Potter says he's fulfilling his patients' reproductive rights.

Dr. POTTER: It's presumptuous of any organization to try to assert that a woman should or _____ be able to determine the number of children she wants to have or the gender of these children.

SHAVELSON: In his afternoon clinic, Dr. Potter greets a couple originally from India.

Dr. POTTER: Today we're going to know more about how many _____ you're going to have.

SHAVELSON: The couple had an _____ marriage 15 years ago and have settled in British Columbia, where they've had two daughters _____ naturally. They've traveled here, staying in a hotel a few blocks from Disneyland while working with Dr. Potter to _____ their next child is a boy. The couple, who do business in the Indian community, say they'd be _____ ostracized if they used their names.

The husband says he wants a son to _____ their business. The wife says there'll be no one to care for them in their old age _____ they have a son.

Unidentified Woman: Girls get married, and they move _____, right? And with a boy, they will stay with us.

Unidentified Man: I really _____ that she's doing so much to get a son in the family.

PART 3

Desirable – significant – scientific – foreign – for – discrimination – responsible – from – consciousness – relationship – to – up – stereotypes - down

SHAVELSON: Sujatha Jasudussin(ph) is Indian-American and the program director at the Center for Genetics and Society in Oakland, a public affairs group that says it wants _____ use of genetic technology. She says sex selection is sex _____.

Ms. SUJATHA JASUDUSSIN (Center for Genetics and Society): There is a whole tone in the culture that says girls are just not as _____.

SHAVELSON: Twenty-five percent of the patients who come to Dr. Potter for gender selection are _____ born. Of those from India, Korea and China, he says 90 percent ask him for boys. That adds up to six boys a month in just his clinic, and while there have been no _____ reports on which sex is chosen in all PGD clinics, one study found that while most patients doing IVF would select boys or girls equally, there was a _____ preference for girls. Dr. Potter says that of his American born patients, 80 percent ask _____ girls, and they tell him why.

Dr. POTTER: It's about the woman desiring to have the _____ that she had with her mother, seeing their daughter walk _____ the aisle, going shopping with them. This potential daughter occupies a space in their consciousness just like a living human being, and for them to give _____ on that, it's like a death.

SHAVELSON: Whether parents want a boy or a girl because of gender _____, ethnic traditions or simply because they have one sex and want the other, it's the intensity of that desire that's motivated doctors in many PGD clinics to take it _____ a procedure designed _____ detect genetic defects to one that selects boys or girls.

For NPR News, I'm Lonny Shavelson.

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