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Islamic Viewpoints on Opportunistic Sex Selection of IVF Embryos upon doing Preimplantation Genetic Testing for Preventing Genetic Diseases

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Abstract

In recent years, preimplantation genetic testing (PGT) of IVF embryos have gained much traction in clinical assisted reproduction for preventing various genetic defects, including Down syndrome. However, such genetic tests inevitably reveal the sex of IVF embryos by identifying the sex (X and Y) chromosomes. In many countries with less stringent IVF regulations, information on the sex of embryos that are tested to be genetically normal is readily shared with patients. This would thus present Muslim patients with unintended opportunities for sex selection based on personal or social biases without any pressing need or valid medical reason. Additionally, there are other patients who claim using PGT for preventing genetic defects as a pretext or "convenient excuse," with a secret intention to do sex selection when it is banned in their home country. Currently, non-medical sex selection is a highly-controversial and hotly debated issue in Islam, because there is generally a strong preference for having sons over daughters due to widespread cultural norms of elderly parents depending on their sons for financial support, as well as the need for male heirs to continue the family lineage within the backdrop of local patriarchal cultures. There is a risk of gender imbalance and social disequilibrium occurring in Islamic societies due to prevalent sex selection. Hence, the question is whether opportunistic sex selection with PGT would contravene Islamic ethics and principles, which will thus be discussed here. © 2023, National University of Singapore and Springer Nature Singapore Pte Ltd.

Author Keywords

Aneuploidy; Gender discrimination; Islamic Bioethics; Preimplantation Genetic Testing; Reproductive ethics; Sex selection

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