

probably—not certainly—develop a serious disease? Or those that will develop a fatal disease only in middle age? Is it morally permissible to cause to exist persons who are severely disabled and likely to suffer horribly throughout their lives? Give reasons for your answer.

*Mark Henderson, "Designer Baby Fear over Heart Gene Test," TimesOnline, 15 December 2007, <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/uk/science/article3054249.ece?> (15 January 2008).

CASE 2

Causing Deaf Children

(*New Scientist*)—A few years ago, a lesbian couple in the U.S. sparked controversy when they chose a deaf sperm donor to ensure their children, like them, would be deaf. Now it appears that some would-be parents are resorting to pre-implantation genetic diagnosis (PGD) to achieve the same thing, by selecting and implanting embryos that will develop into deaf children.

This comes from a survey by the Genetics and Public Policy Center in Washington DC on how PGD is being used in the U.S.

Deep inside the report is this paragraph: "Some prospective parents have sought PGD to select an embryo for the presence of a particular disease or disability, such as deafness, in order that the child would share that characteristic with the parents. Three per cent of IVF-PGD clinics report having provided PGD to couples who seek to use PGD in this manner."

It is not clear how many, if any, children have been born after embryo selection for a disability, or which disabilities have been selected for. I asked Susannah Baruch, the lead author of the GPPC report, who told me that the team does not have any more details.

So let's do the sums: Since the survey included 137 IVF-PGD clinics, 3% means 4 couples at least, more if you assume some of the 200 clinics who did not respond to the survey have also provided this service. And since the success rate of IVF is roughly 30%, even if each couple made only one attempt at least one child must have been born with a designer disability, most likely deafness, with the help of PGD.*

Is it right to deliberately cause a child to be deaf and thereby limit her opportunities in life? If so, why? If not, why not? Should medical authorities or the government restrict the use of IVF and PGD to selecting only healthy embryos? If both prospective parents have inherited deafness, there is a high probability that their child will be deaf. So their failing to use IVF/PGD to select healthy embryos would almost guarantee a deaf baby. Is such a failure morally wrong? If so, is deliberately selecting impaired embryos equally wrong? Explain.

*Michael Le Page, "Designer Deafness," *New Scientist*, 29 September 2006.

CASE 3

Cosmetic Embryo Selection

(*London Telegraph*)—Embryos are to be screened for a cosmetic defect for the first time in a British clinic.

Doctors have been given permission to create a baby free from a genetic disorder which would have caused the child to have a severe squint.

The Bridge Centre family clinic, in London, has been licensed to treat a businessman and his wife to create the baby. Both the businessman and his father suffer from the condition, which causes the eyes only to look downwards or sideways.

Critics have said that the permission is another step on the road to creating only perfect-looking babies in the laboratory.

The licence was granted by the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority (HFEA) to Prof. Geddis Grudzinskas, who believes the landmark ruling marks a shift away from granting licences only for life-threatening conditions.

He said: "We will increasingly see the use of embryo screening for severe cosmetic conditions."

He added that he would seek to screen for any genetic factor at all that would cause a family severe distress.

When asked if he would screen embryos for factors like hair colour, he said: "If there is a cosmetic aspect to an individual case I would assess it on its merits. [Hair colour] can be a cause of bullying which