

## Philosophy Presentation

### Ethical Dilemmas in Human Reproductive Technologies

**Method for Case Study 1** Note: this is not possible right now for human beings.

This is a hypothetical Ethics Committee that is meeting to discuss the risks and benefits of the procedure. Each person will role-play one of the members of the committee. The object is not to take sides, but rather to look at the safety and ethical issues, and the implications for society if they decide to approve June & Jerry's case.

Questions to help focus each role-player and the discussion:

1. PhD in Public Health Policy - study the processes by which health policies are created and implemented, the consequences of health care interventions to quality of care and quality of life, and the management of health care systems and institutions. This person has the goal of evaluating how ethical and socio-cultural values shape - and should shape—health policies as well as clinical and public health practices.  
**I evaluate how ethical and socio-cultural values shape—and should shape—health policies as well as clinical and public health practices.**
2. Psychologist - use various techniques, including interviewing and testing, to advise people on how to deal with problems of everyday living.  
**I address the psychological and personal impacts on patients (and their family members) who wish to undergo fertility treatments.**
3. Ethicist - The branch of philosophy that deals with distinctions between right and wrong and with the moral consequences of human actions. Examples of ethical issues that arise in medical practice and research include informed consent, confidentiality, respect for human rights, and scientific integrity.  
**I look at the distinctions between right and wrong and the moral consequences of human actions.**
4. Religious/Spiritual advisor - Can be a priest, pastor, rabbi, monk, imam. All major religions attach special meaning to embryos, although significant disagreement exists about the details of embryo status. The Vatican considers embryos to be persons from conception and rejects IVF because it separates sex and reproduction. Conservative and Orthodox Judaism both attach greater but varying significance to embryos after the 40th day of conception, while both the Sunni and Shia branches of Islam believe that ensoulment (the condition for being a person) occurs around the fourth month of gestation. Protestant Christian views vary widely, considering personhood to arise anywhere from conception to birth.
5. M.A. in Social Work - Social workers help people function the best way they can in their environment, deal with their relationships, and solve personal and family problems. Social workers often see clients who face a life-threatening disease or a social problem.  
**I look at the social problems that the patient may have to navigate as a result of a reproductive decision -- dealing with managed care institutions, financial matters, and potential ostracism by other family members or community.**

6. PhD in Genetic Counseling - educate families about genetic conditions and about reproductive options and preventive strategies that may reduce their risk. They conduct genetic counseling interviews and participate in genetics evaluations in which information is gathered and imparted, family reactions and understanding are explored, and help is given with clarification and decision-making.

**I educate families about specific genetic conditions and the reproductive options and preventive strategies that may reduce their risk.**

7. Lawyer - offer childless couples administrative support for and assistance with numerous family-building alternatives, including ovum (egg) donations and surrogacy programs. Make their clients aware of legal issues surrounding IVF - such as what to do with excess eggs if the couple divorces.

**I examine the legal ramifications of reproductive decisions taken by the patients as well as represent the fertility clinic in lawsuits.**

8. Physician - plays an important role in supporting those who wish to become parents and in educating patients about impediments to fertilization and ways to promote conception.

**I am usually the first point of contact for patients, so my role is to support them in becoming parents and educating them about impediments to fertilization and ways to promote conception.**

### **Method for Case Study 2**

The class will be divided into 2 groups of 4. One group will take the pro perspective and the other group will take the con perspective. Each group will try to come up with reasons why the scenario should/should not be approved.

1. What are the major arguments against this scenario?
2. What are the major arguments in favor of this scenario?
3. What kinds of disclosure obligations do you think parents might have with respect to their cloned children? Should they be told?

### **Case Study 3 - "Savior siblings"**

The whole class will have read this case study and we will discuss it as a group. Questions for discussion:

1. Does this use of stem cells encourage the "instrumental" use of human embryos?
2. How is this different from parents who try to have another child "naturally" in order to use that child's tissue or bone marrow?
3. Do you think it is right/moral/ethical to dispose of those embryos who that turned out NOT to be a tissue match for the sick child? (In this case, using IVF, 199 embryos were created, of which nearly a quarter - 45 embryos - were selected as being HLA-matched. HLA or Human Leukocyte Antigen determines the compatibility between the tissues of a donor and a recipient. A total of 28 embryos were transferred to the women in IVF cycles, resulting in five pregnancies and births.)
4. When compared with prenatal diagnosis and possibly termination of the pregnancy (if a genetic disorder is found), is PGD more or less ethical/desirable?

**Case Study 4 - “PGD for Alzheimer’s Disease”**

The whole class will have read this case study and we will discuss it as a group. Questions for discussion:

1. Do you think that it is right/moral for this woman to try to have a child that she \_may\_ not be able to take care of?
2. Is reproduction a privilege or is it an inalienable right? Is it a need so profound and fundamental as to trump the rights and needs of others?
3. Would it have made a difference [to how you feel] if a father had been in the picture?