

**SEX SELECTION: Choice and Responsibility in Human Reproduction  
PROGAR Response to the Public Consultation**

**Name:** Professor Eric Blyth

**Organisation:** PROGAR

**Address:** c/o School of Human and Health Sciences  
University of Huddersfield  
Queensgate  
Huddersfield HD1 3DH

**Regulation of Sperm Sorting**

1. sperm sorting should be regulated in the United Kingdom by the HFEA

Agree

**Reasons:** In order to ensure proper safeguards the procedure should be subject to independent regulation and licensing

2. The use of sperm sorting should be permitted **only** when its reliability and absence of risk to health have been satisfactorily established

Agree

**Reasons:** It is unethical to expose people (both those seeking to conceive a child of a particular sex and those born following sperm sorting procedures) to unknown risks. Given both the current levels of predictive reliability of sperm sorting and the fact that parents contemplating any technique to ensure a child of a particular sex for reasons other than the prevention of a sex-linked genetic disorder are likely to have particularly strong reasons for doing so, we would be concerned about the implications for children who were the 'wrong sex'. Regulation under the provisions of the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act 1990 will also mean that account will have to be taken of the welfare of the child when contemplating such procedures.

**Use of sperm sorting and PGD**

3. The use of sperm sorting should be permitted in sex selection for **medical** reasons if the people seeking treatment request it

Disagree

**Reasons:** Whilst we agree that sperm sorting should be permitted for sex-selection for medical reasons (specifically the prevention of sex-linked disabilities and

illnesses), this should not be 'on demand' but made available only subject to the conditions outlined in 2 above, i.e. the proven efficacy of the technique and account taken of the welfare of the child. We do not believe that use of sperm sorting and/or PGD to prevent the conception or birth of a child with a high risk of developing a severe disability implies any diminution of respect for existing individuals with such illnesses or disabilities or for the provision of health and support services for them. Neither do we believe that, if sperm sorting or PGD identifies that a child may be at such risk, parents should be pressurised in any way not to proceed with the pregnancy. In the event of any child being born with serious illness or disability, appropriate levels of health care and support should be made available irrespective of the prior use of sperm sorting or PGD.

4. The use of sperm sorting should be permitted for **non-medical** reasons

Disagree

Reasons: The use of any technique (currently either sperm sorting or PGD) for sex selection for non-medical reasons is ethically unacceptable. It begins to commodify the child and to value him or her primarily for his sex rather than for his or her intrinsic qualities

5. The use of preimplantation genetic diagnosis (PGD) should be permitted for selecting the sex of offspring for **non-medical** reasons (It is already available for medical reasons)

Disagree

Reasons: As for 4 above

6. It would be preferable to combine sperm sorting with preimplantation genetic diagnosis (PGD) when selecting the sex of offspring for **medical** reasons (rather than using either technique singly)

Agree:

Reasons: Once sperm sorting is proven to be a safe technique, there are advantages in combining it with PGD as outlined in the consultation document (paras 49 and 50)

#### **Criteria for non-medical uses of sex selection**

7. Sex selection (by either sperm sorting or PGD) should be permitted for **non-medical** reasons when a family has at least two children of one sex and none of the other sex

Disagree

Reasons: See reply to 4 above. We do not see any justification for permitting sex selection other than as a means of preventing the birth of a child with serious sex-linked genetic conditions

8. Sex selection (by either sperm sorting or PGD) should be permitted for **non-medical** reasons other than family balancing.

Disagree

Reasons: See reply to 4 and 7 above.