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# Genetics and Human Behavior

IV annual Swedish Symposium on Biomedicine, Ethics and Society

When Does Genetics Play a Role in Understanding Human Behavior?

Sandhamn Hotell & Konferens, May 27-28, 2002

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## **Genetics – Transforming the Clinical Encounter in Reproductive Medicine? Moral difficulties from the perspective of medical professionals**

In the beginning, there were human beings and human beings acted in and upon the world, and there was knowledge. Today, the perceived limits of human knowledge are revised and reshaped. Medical genetics provides us with deepened genetic knowledge and partly new modes of explaining human biology and human behaviour. Furthermore, new reproductive technologies evoke partly new ethical questions, or reshape “old” ones. This is also the case in the clinical encounter in the context of reproductive medicine.

Has the clinical encounter changed when a genetic diagnosis such as preimplantation genetic diagnosis (PGD) is available, and if so, how has the clinical encounter changed? This question is addressed in the presentation. A specific focus is directed to moral dilemmas and other moral events, as experienced and reflected upon by a selected number of medical professionals. The presentation focuses on the clinical encounter between Swedish, Italian, and British medical geneticists or gynaecologists and women and men at high risk for genetic diseases. Use of preimplantation genetic diagnosis provides women and men at high risk for genetic diseases with a new “reproductive option.” Such an option is generally described in positive words by the interviewees, but it does also evoke difficult ethical questions. The option of PGD does sometimes transform itself and becomes a moral dilemma, a request, and a human right.

The analysis of the interviews is a part of the project “Lifeviews, Human Nature, and Genetics.” Interviews are performed with six Swedish, six Italian, and six British medical geneticists or gynaecologists.



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