



UPPSALA
UNIVERSITET

Ethics at the beginning of life

V Annual Swedish Symposium on Biomedicine, Ethics and Society

Sandhamn Hotell & Konferens, June 2-3, 2003

Kristin Zeiler
Tema Health and Society
Department of Health and society /IHS
Linköping University
581 85 Linköping

kristin.zeiler@ihs.liu.se

Choices and their limits in the context of reproductive medicine. What autonomy? Whose autonomy?

New reproductive technologies reshape “old” ethical questions in the clinical encounter in the context of preimplantation genetic diagnosis (PGD). Has the clinical encounter changed when a genetic diagnosis such as preimplantation genetic diagnosis (PGD) is available, and if so, how has it changed? More specifically, what kind of choice do professionals and patients face? In what sense and to what extent can autonomous choices be made? These questions are addressed in the presentation, on the basis of different kinds of analyses of qualitative research interviews with 18 gynaecologists and geneticists in Sweden, Italy and Britain.

Enhancement of autonomous choice may be considered as an important reason for facilitating the use of genetic tests, such as PGD. On the basis of the analyses, the plausibility of the notion of autonomy within reproductive medicine is discussed. The analyses of the interviews indicate not only that there is a gap between theoretical discussions and concrete practice, but also that an increase in choice – paradoxically - can hamper couples’ choice. Use of PGD provides women and men at high risk for genetic diseases with a new reproductive option – a choice. However, the possibility to choose PGD sometimes transforms itself and becomes a moral dilemma and a request.

Furthermore, the paper is an example of how qualitative and philosophical analysis of empirical data can be combined.