

“There is Such a Thing as Too Many Daughters, but not Too Many Sons”

Patient and Physician Perspectives on
Sex Selection Among South Asian
Immigrants in the United States

Sunita Puri, Medical Student Year 3
University of California, San Francisco

Goals of Presentation

- Extend questions about sex selection from India to the immigrant context
- Ethical evaluation of sex selection in the United States, where it is legal
- Clinician's perspectives on Clinical impact of sex selection
- Difficulty of addressing sex selection in immigrant context
- Is what is legal always ethical?

Sex Selection Technologies: Postconception

- Ultrasound
- Amniocentesis, CVS
- “At Home” Gender Testing Kits
- Selective Abortion
- Infanticide

Sex Selection Technologies: Preconception

- Ericsson (albumin) sperm sorting
- Flow cytometric sperm separation
- Different success rates by gender
 - 70-75% for males
 - 80-88% for females

Sex Selection Technologies: Preimplantation Genetic Diagnosis

- Sex chromosomes of embryos determined
- Only embryos of desired sex transferred
- Controversial
- Expensive (requires IVF)

Sex Selection Technologies: Advertisements

IS YOUR BABY BOY OR GIRL?

AN ULTRASOUND EXAMINATION WILL TELL YOU.

The ultrasound is safe and effective, we do not use needles. There is no risk or harm to the unborn baby. We let you see your unborn baby on a T.V. screen and give you photographs to keep.

- **You are told the sex immediately.**
- **There is no waiting.**
- **Privacy and confidentiality guaranteed.**

Call Now

Sex Selection Technologies: Advertisements

**CHOOSING THE SEX OF YOUR BABY
A NEW SCIENTIFIC REALITY !**

**ਵਿਗਿਆਨ ਦਾ ਨਵਾਂ ਚਮਤਕਾਰ
ਹੁਣ ਗਰਭਵਤੀ ਹੋਣ ਤੋਂ ਪਹਿਲਾਂ ਹੀ ਔਰਤ
ਇਹ ਫੈਸਲਾ ਕਰ ਸਕਦੀ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਉਸਦੇ
ਪੇਟ ਅੰਦਰਲਾ ਬੱਚਾ ਮੁੰਡਾ ਹੋਵੇ ਜਾਂ ਕੁੜੀ ?**

Today, a Technique Developed by Dr. Ronald Ericsson of California for sex selection is being used extensively. The method is presently offering couples a chance to pre-determine the sex of their Baby before conception.

The Ericsson Method for Male Selection Produces 75% to 80% Male Infants. Techniques for Female Selection are also available.



This programme of Treatment is widely offered in the United States and other parts of the World.

If you are interested in Choosing the Sex of your Baby, please telepho...



A BOY OR A GIRL

The choice is yours. Safe, effective, and confidential.
YOU CAN CHOOSE THE GENDER OF YOUR BABY

Using the Ericsson method of Sperm Separation and intra-uterine insemination.
"75-80% OF COUPLES PARTICIPATING IN GENDER PRE-SELECTION HAVE A
BABY OF THEIR CHOSEN GENDER."

Call now for a free brochure or office consultation

SURESH R. NAYAK M.D. Inc.

Diplomate, American Board of Obstetrics and Gynecology
303 North 15th Street (Fifteenth and Julian) #D
San Jose, CA 95112
(408) 279-3692

*Celebrating
25 years
in practice*

*Only Licensed
Gametrics Center
in South Bay*

Private, confidential, care of pregnancy, delivery, infertility, birth control, etc.
Urgent appointments available. Laboratory tests drawn & ultrasounds done in the office.

Most insurances accepted. Plenty of free parking. Hindi, Marathi spoken.

FREE PREGNANCY TEST NO APPOINTMENT NECESSARY.

Visit us at: www.babybirth.com



The MicroSort® Gender-Selection Program at GIVF

Do You Want To Choose the Gender Of Your Next Baby?



If you want to choose — or need to choose — whether your next baby is a girl or a boy, you may qualify for the MicroSort® gender selection procedure at the Genetics & IVF Institute (GIVF).

Prospective parents come from all over the world to GIVF in suburban Washington, DC. They choose this exclusive *scientifically-based* sperm sorting gender selection procedure, currently in an FDA clinical trial, for several important reasons:

- For prevention of genetic diseases
- For family balancing
- Results so far show 90% success rate for achieving girls and 75% for boys.
- FREE MicroSort for qualifying patients who use Donor Egg or Preimplantation Genetic Diagnosis at GIVF.
- For sensitive, personal attention from a caring staff of professionals, dedicated to the success of your family.

Couples also choose the Genetics & IVF Institute because we are the world's largest integrated provider of infertility and genetic services. Our expertise in the diagnosis and treatment of complex genetic and reproductive disorders is second to none.

To learn more about the Genetics & IVF Institute, and how the MicroSort® technology may help you select the gender of your next child — please visit us at:

www.givf.com

or call us at

1-800-277-6607

*Now available in New York and
other metropolitan areas
through collaborating physicians.
Call for details.*

Caution: This procedure uses an
investigational device
limited by federal law to
investigational
use.

GENETICS & IVF INSTITUTE



History of Sex Selection in India

- Sex disparities predate the introduction of technology
- Noted since first British-administered census in 1890
- British colonial policy sought to eradicate female infanticide
- Sikh holy texts consider female infanticide (*kurri maar*) sinful

Impact of Sex Selection on Women's Health

- Reproductive coercion/marital rape
- Forced abortion and multiple abortions
- Threat of abandonment or divorce
- Physical punishment and abuse during pregnancy with female fetus
- Selective neglect of female children
- 100 million missing girls since 1979 (Jha, P., et al. *Lancet*, January 2006)

What About South Asian Immigrants?

- Advertisements in community newspapers
- Films (“Pink Ladoos”) and written debates about sex selection (Canada and New York)
- Anecdotal evidence from women’s organizations
- Legality of sex selection/determination outside of South Asia

Research Questions

- What social and cultural factors contribute to South Asian immigrant women's decisions to determine fetal sex by early ultrasound, or to seek pre-conception sex selection services?
- How do the primary care providers (PCPs) of South Asian immigrant patients and the physicians providing sex selection technologies (SSTs) understand the social and ethical implications of these technologies?

Study Design

- Qualitative research using participant observation and semi-structured interviews
- Interviews with 75 immigrant South Asian women and men aged 19-65
- Interviews with 35 PCPs and 10 SSTs
- Data collected in US and Canada
- Transcribed interviews coded using grounded theory and inductive analysis

Study Limitations

- Taboo subjects discussed
- Self-selected sample
- Participants are from different communities with distinct histories and culture

Attitudes SST Providers

- **Autonomy**
- **Beneficence**
- **Cultural competence**
- **Advancement of Science**

Attitudes of SST Providers: Autonomy

- Respect for couple's autonomy
- Non-judgmental, non-directive counseling
- Women's freedom of choice
- Individual choice of greater importance than societal impact

Attitudes of SST Providers: Beneficence

- Prevention of abuse
- Preservation of women's health
- Prevention of unwanted children
- "Balanced families are happy families"

Attitudes of SST Providers: “Cultural Competence”

- Desire for sons in “Indian culture”
- Racist to deny members of one community access to these services
- Advertisements made culturally and linguistically appropriate

Attitudes of SST Providers: Advancement of Science

- Inevitability of scientific progress
- “If we have the science, why shouldn't it be available to the public?”

Attitudes of PCPs

- **Autonomy**
- **Questioning beneficence**
- **Questioning societal effects**
- **Advancement of Science**

Attitudes of PCPs: Autonomy

- Witnessing reproductive coercion: husbands, in-laws, 'community pressure' to have sons
- Questioning unlimited 'reproductive rights' because of effects on children
- Societal effects of couples' decisions

Attitudes of PCPs: Questioning Beneficence

- Questionable efficacy of technologies
- Selective neglect of female children
- Technology's contribution to son preference
- Technology's inability to end family violence and reproductive coercion

Attitudes of PCPs: Questioning Societal Effects

- Contribution to sexism
- Normalization of Patriarchy
- Slippery Slope: Selection of other attributes of children
- Lack of technology regulation

Comparison of Attitudes PCPs vs. Providers of SSTs

- Understandings of 'Autonomy' and 'Beneficence'
- Perceived responsibilities to patients
- Technology's impact on gender-based violence
- 'Cultural Competence' and societal impact

Comparison of Patient and Physician Perspectives

- Patients: Availability of technology can increase pressure to use it
- Physicians: Technology is empowering by increasing “choice”
- Patients: Lived experience of culture
- Physicians: Superficial understanding of culture and empowerment

Identity and Ethics

- South Asian clinicians struggled with professionally mandated ethics and their personally motivated ethics
- Professional and Community identity were often at odds

Clinical Implications: OB/GYN

- Domestic violence during pregnancy
- Experience of pregnancy, delivery and post-partum period
- Impact on post-partum depression and infant care
- Disclosure uncommon: more common in interactions with members of same ethnic background

Clinical Implications: Pediatrics

- Gender-based child neglect
- Delay of bringing daughters to physicians relative to sons
- Disclosure uncommon

Implications

- Interpretation of ethical principles
- Place of “cultural competence”
- Long term impact of sex selection on family unit and children visible in primary care settings
- Multiplicity of viewpoints of physicians
- Space for clinicians to speak about sex selection based on clinical evidence

Policy Implications and Ethical Questions

- Intake and screening procedures at sex selection clinics
- Regulation of technology cited by physicians in other countries
- Towards a GLOBAL bioethical agenda in terms of technology's impact and regulation

Acknowledgements!

- The women, families, and physicians who so graciously and courageously shared their stories with me
- Mentors and Advisors
- NBC, especially SP Kalantri, Amar Jesani, Vibhuti Patel, Sandhya Srinivasan
- UC San Francisco Clinical Research Fellowship Funding
- Friends and Family!
- Contact Information: sunita.puri@ucsf.edu