

SOGC Statement on Genetic Screening

On February 5th, the Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada (SOGC) will be releasing a guideline on access to non-invasive prenatal genetic screening methods. In this guideline, the SOGC will recommend that every Canadian woman, regardless of her age, should be offered the choice to access non-invasive prenatal screening methods involving maternal blood tests or ultrasound. The guideline is written by medical experts, and employs standard medical terminology that is in no way intended to discriminate against any person or group.

The SOGC, like the Canadian Down Syndrome Society, believes that the choice to access prenatal genetic screening should be offered to all women. This belief is founded on the fact that the results of this testing can provide valuable health information that can be used by parents and healthcare professionals to prepare and ensure a safe pregnancy for mother and child. In addition, the SOGC believes that women have a right to access this information about their child's health and development.

In January, it was inaccurately reported in the media that the SOGC will be recommending that all women should undergo this screening. This inaccuracy also appears in an early version of a Feb. 1 press release distributed by the Canadian Down Syndrome Society.

Should screening results indicate a high likelihood of Down Syndrome or other chromosomal anomaly, the SOGC believes that it is critically important that healthcare providers provide balanced and non-directive counseling. The need for balanced non-directive counseling will be included in the recommendations of the upcoming guideline, which will be released publicly on February 5th.

It has been expressed to the SOGC that some healthcare professionals currently do not offer this balanced counseling. For this reason, the SOGC proposed in January a collaboration with the Canadian Down Syndrome Society to further promote the importance of balanced and non-directional counseling to our members.

For more information on the SOGC's position on access to prenatal genetic screening, please read our Jan. 17th position statement, which is available on our website at:
<http://www.sogc.org/home/pdf/sogc-statement-on-access-to-genetic-screening.pdf>

The Canadian Down Syndrome's position statement on prenatal genetic screening is also available online at:

http://www.cdss.ca/en/about_us/policies_and_statements/prenatal_genetic_testing.htm

Full details of the SOGC's guideline on prenatal genetic screening will be available to media and the public on February 5th, 2007.

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