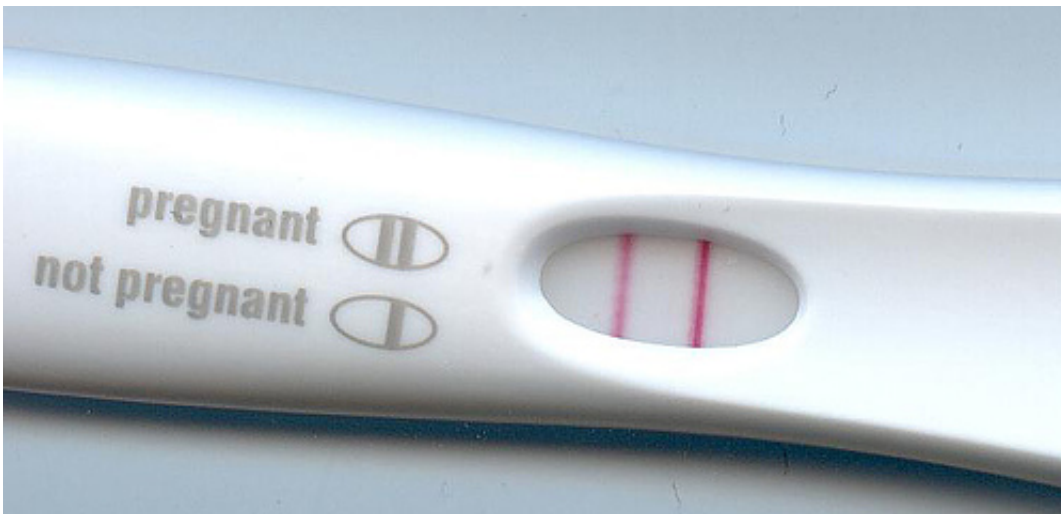


Researcher suggests changes to consent forms for pregnant women undergoing prenatal DNA screening

June 4 2015, by Bob Yirka



Pregnancy test. Credit: public domain

(Medical Xpress)—Diana Bianchi, executive director of the Mother Infant Research Institute at Tufts Medical Center has published a Comment piece in the journal *Nature* calling for changes to consent forms given to pregnant women about to undergo prenatal chromosomal screening. In it she points out that most such women are unaware that their own DNA is also being screened and that it is possible that such screening could reveal health problems in the mother as well.

Over the past several years, blood samples drawn from pregnant women

for use in chromosomal screening has become popular—fetal DNA ends up in the mother's blood, allowing for screening without the need for an invasive procedure—Bianchi reports that over a million and a half women have undergone the test since 2011, most hoping to discover that their new baby will be healthy. But, she also cautions, there are some concerns with the tests.

The main concern is that [mothers](#) undergoing [screening tests](#) do not realize that the [screening](#) could also reveal things such as a tumor growing in her own body or the presence of a chromosomal abnormality—news that could be devastating, especially coming out of the blue. Bianchi suggests that what is needed is more information for women considering the test as part of the process of signing a consent form. Currently, she notes, there is no set process in place for screeners who discover something unexpected about the mother—some may choose to ignore what they have found, others may send along the information with the results. In either case, the desires of the mother are not being taken into consideration. Bianchi believes it should be stated right in the consent form—that the mother understands that such information may be revealed and that she either agrees to having it given to her, or prefers to not know about it.

Bianchi has another concern about the tests as well—they are not designed as diagnostic tools for [pregnant women](#), or even their unborn children, and thus are not approved for such use, that means the validity of the results is not always certain. Because of that, any aberrations are meant to serve as a warning sign, not a final judgment—women who receive upsetting news are advised to undergo additional tests, such as amniocentesis if a problem is found with the baby, or whatever tests an oncologist or geneticists suggests if the problem appears to be with the mother, rather than respond with a knee-jerk reaction.

More information: Pregnancy: Prepare for unexpected prenatal test

results, *Nature*, [www.nature.com/news/pregnancy- ... test-results-1.17655](http://www.nature.com/news/pregnancy-...test-results-1.17655)

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Citation: Researcher suggests changes to consent forms for pregnant women undergoing prenatal DNA screening (2015, June 4) retrieved 4 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2015-06-consent-pregnant-women-prenatal-dna.html>

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