

Corporate governance, transparency issues shadow ‘designer baby’ innovations

When 23andMe was awarded a patent for its DNA analysis tool a few weeks ago, it ignited a heated debate over the idea of “designer babies.” Proponents argued that it would allow parents to minimize genetic diseases in their children, while critics claimed it was the first step towards allowing parents to select certain genes for specific traits.

According to Barbara Prainsac, who wrote about the issue in an article on *Genomes Unzipped*, the 23andMe patent has also raised an important issue that is going overlooked in the media attention surrounding 23andMe. While the media has focused largely on the ethical questions behind what implications this technology could have, the issue also raises the idea of the ongoing conflict between corporate governance and open science, Prainsac wrote.

“I am not worried about human reproduction going *Gattaca*. I agree with those colleagues who maintain that there is a qualitative difference between selecting gametes to prevent severe diseases and selecting for other traits,” wrote Prainsac. “I do not believe, however, that such practices will become so widespread, or so technologically accurate, that they will damage society. The controversy about 23andMe’s most recent patent is instructive in a different sense: It shows what happens when traditional corporate governance clashes with the rhetoric of open science.”

Read the full, original story here: 23andMe’s “designer baby” patent: When corporate governance and open science collide

Additional Resources:

- [“US firm patents DNA-analysis tool for planning a baby,”](#) New Scientist
- “A 23andMe Patent,” 23andMe
- [“Designer Babies: A Right to Choose?”](#) Wired