

CfP BMBF Symposium: Ethical, legal and social aspects of invasive and non-invasive genetic prenatal diagnostics in Germany and Poland

Hosting institution: University Ulm, Faculty of Medicine, Institute of the History, Philosophy and Ethics of Medicine, Prof. Dr. Florian Steger and Dr. Maximilian Schochow

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Deadline: 4. December 2016

The European-wide introduction of new, easily accessible and non-invasive prenatal genetic diagnostics such as the PraenaTest® led internationally to diversely articulated discussions on the chances and risks of genetic diagnostics. In these discussions a broad consensus has been achieved in only one point: non-invasive genetic blood tests present new ethical, social and legal challenges. Critics claim that the fast and low-cost availability of these genetic tests could result in treating them as an integral component of standard prenatal diagnostics. This could restrict the mother's right not to know and self-determination, since the availability of this technology is associated with the expectation to use it. The introduction of non-invasive genetic tests not only raised questions in Germany but also contributed to debates in Poland. Even before the introduction of the tests, the issue of invasive and non-invasive diagnostics was controversially discussed in Poland. On the one hand, the advantages of the non-invasive versus invasive prenatal diagnostics, of which the latter can be associated with complications for mother and child, were emphasized. On the other hand, numerous positions generally rejected prenatal genetic diagnostics on the grounds that it possesses no therapeutic benefits.

During the BMBF Symposium "Ethical, legal and social aspects of invasive and non-invasive genetic prenatal diagnostics in Germany and Poland", German and Polish junior scientists from various disciplines will be able to deal intensively with the topic areas of the symposium. Together with internationally renowned experts, the similarities and differences between Germany and Poland in the area of prenatal diagnostics will be analyzed and discussed. Through interdisciplinary cooperation, questions raised by the establishment and development of prenatal diagnosis are to be answered within the framework of the symposium. Participants can submit their contributions in the following topics:

- 1) Ethical questions: Should non-invasive gene diagnostics become an integral part of the prenatal standard diagnostics? To what extent should the mother's right to self-determination be considered? What information is needed to make a self-responsible decision? Do parents have the right to decide against the findings? What is the status of the fetus in the decision-making process and how can the child's welfare be taken into account in prenatal diagnostics and therapy?
- 2) Legal questions: What legal measures are necessary in Germany and Poland to react to the changed diagnostic practice? What developments have been insufficiently considered in the existing legal regulations in both countries? To what extent the developments in genetic diagnostics affect basic legal regulations?
- 3) Social questions: Does improved diagnostics make it necessary to interrupt pregnancy of a fetus with a possible chromosomal disorder? How can social framework conditions be designed to enable parents to make a self-determined decision? How do the issues of illness and disability change when a genetic disposition becomes diagnosed early?

These topics should serve as suggestions and first orientation for participants' contributions. Proposals from other areas are welcome.

The BMBF Symposium is organized by the Institute of the History, Philosophy and Ethics of Medicine of the University of Ulm. It is interdisciplinary and addressed to young scientists from the fields of human medicine, the humanities, social sciences and natural sciences. In thematically specific sections, the participants will have the opportunity to present their own research projects from the area of interests and to discuss them intensively. The presentations and the discussions during the Symposium will be supplemented by lectures by renowned experts in the field.

Interested young researchers are invited to submit a scientific abstract in German or English (up to 500 words) as well as a short academic resume until **4th of December 2016** in electronic form (PDF) by e-mail to project coordinator Dr. Marcin Orzechowski: **marcin.orzechowski@uni-ulm.de**. For further questions, please contact Dr. Marcin Orzechowski. The number of participants is limited to 15. The languages of the Symposium are German and English. The costs of travel, board and lodging will be covered. In addition, all participants will receive a compensation of 300€.