



## 6th International Conference on Clinical Ethics Consultation

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### Abstract Submission Form – Major Papers

Please contact John Tuohey at [ethics@providence.org](mailto:ethics@providence.org) with any questions.

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Proposed title of paper: "Is it my fault that I am a female?" Ethics of sex selection in the Indian Context

Abstract with 3 clearly stated objectives in 250 words:

Objectives:

- To study the socio religious basis for male child preference
- To explore the phenomenon of sex selection vis-a-vis legal instruments
- Attempt to understand the ethical and legal constructs for a new paradigm.

The Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act (1971) liberalized abortion in India and since then more than ten million female fetuses may have been aborted. One in every five girls is being eliminated at the foetal stage. There were 925 girls for every 1,000 boys less than 7 years of age, when Punjab's first ultrasound clinic opened in 1979. By 1991, it was 875, and by 2001, to 793. The government was forced to enact the Pre-Conception and Pre-natal Diagnostic Techniques (Prohibition of Sex Selection) Act (1994), to check the feticides. The rule conflicts the beliefs of the people and the physician is caught in the dilemma.

Male children are looked upon as insurance against old age. It is believed that when a man dies, his soul cannot reach heaven unless the funeral pyre is lit by his son. So having a son is the most important sub-clause in the contract of marriage, and a man is permitted to leave his wife if she cannot bear him a male child after 11 years of marriage. Sons are virtual gold mines, as they get fat sums of money in the form of dowry.

What if our approach to the problem is up side down? What if sex selection were to be made legal but with certain riders? The family cannot be entitled to choose the sex of the first child, or when there is equilibrium of choices, and only the less represented sex could be chosen. Would this 'legalizing' of sex selection lead to exploration of newer paradigms?

What significant contribution to the field of clinical ethics consultation does this presentation make?  
(250 words)

When a lady seeks abortion, it is allowed by law under the physical, mental or psychological grounds. But when the lady seeks abortion on the grounds that she already has three or four female children and not having a male child would displace her from her status as wife, the Pre-natal Diagnsotic Techniques Act forbids the doctor from carrying out ultra sonography to detect the sex of the fetus and if found to be carrying female fetus, prohibits the doctor from carrying out abortion.

The presentation will address ethical case deliberation regarding abortion and stress on helping physicians' cope with their dilemma.

If you have or will publish on this topic, please cite reference:

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Are you planning to or will you be willing to submit a poster along with your major paper?

Yes     No