

Table 1A Research ethics committee members were asked to indicate their opinion of each scenario on a scale of 1 (totally ethical) to 5 (totally unethical)

Block	Q	Scenario description	Ethical?		
			Yes	??	No
A	1	A screening test for a serious condition can identify 60% of affected individuals but 5% of unaffected pregnancies will also be identified. All screen positive cases will be given a diagnostic test. One in 50 (2%) of the screen positive fetuses will be affected by the condition. Women with affected babies will be offered a termination. The diagnostic test has no risk of harming an unaffected fetus.	43	11	21
	2	As 1 above but for every 2 affected fetuses identified by the diagnostic test, 1 normal fetus will spontaneously abort as a result of the procedure	6	10	60
	3	As 1 above but for every 1 affected fetuses identified, 2 normal fetuses will spontaneously abort as a result of the procedure	5	2	69
B	4	It is planned to offer a prenatal screening test to identify babies with a condition that may be embarrassing but which has no effect on life span, intelligence or health. Women whose pregnancies screen positive for this condition will be offered a termination.	5	3	68
	5	It is planned to offer a prenatal screening test to identify babies which will be born with a life threatening condition. Early identification will ensure surgical treatment / neonatal intensive care is available when the baby is born.	73	2	2
C	6	It is planned to offer a screening test to identify babies that will be born with a condition that reduces their life expectancy by 10 years, but will be otherwise entirely normal. Women whose pregnancies screen positive for this condition will be offered a termination.	4	7	66
	7	As 6 above, but affected individuals will require drug treatment to ensure they only lose 10 years of life. Women whose pregnancies screen positive for this condition will be offered a termination.	9	7	61
D	8	It is planned to offer a screening test to identify babies that will be born with a condition that reduces their life expectancy by 50 years (i.e. likely to live to only 30 years). No treatment for this condition is currently available. Women whose pregnancies screen positive for this condition will be offered a termination.	20	18	39
	9	As 8 above, but, much research into this condition is happening and a cure is likely in the next 15 years. Women whose pregnancies screen positive for this condition will be offered a termination.	16	18	43
E	10	It is planned to offer a screening test to identify babies that will be born with a condition that causes slight lowering of education potential. Affected individuals would be unlikely to be able to pass A levels but should pass GCSEs. Women whose pregnancies screen positive for this condition will be offered a termination	2	3	72
	11	As 10 above but affected individuals would be unlikely to be pass GCSEs. Women whose pregnancies screen positive for this condition will be offered a termination.	1	6	70
	12	As 10 above but the condition that may cause severe lowering of education potential. Affected individuals may need specialised education but may have some areas in which they perform extremely well. Women whose pregnancies screen positive for this condition will be offered a termination.	5	11	61
F	13	As 12 above but affected adults tend to be happy individuals and do not know or realise they are 'different'. Approximately 10% of these babies may be born with a severe heart condition and the remaining 90% have a life expectancy approximately 10 years shorter than an unaffected individual. Women whose pregnancies screen positive for this condition will be offered a termination.	7	27	43
	14	As 12 above but the screening test identifies 60% of affected pregnancies but 5% of unaffected pregnancies are also identified. The diagnostic test has no risk of harming an unaffected fetus. Only 1 in 800 pregnancies is an affected baby	14	19	43
	15	As 14 above but for every 2 affected fetuses identified by the diagnostic test, 1 normal fetus will spontaneously abort as a result of the procedure. Only 1 in 800 pregnancies is an affected baby	4	7	66
	16	As 14 above but for every 1 affected fetus identified by the diagnostic test, 2 normal fetuses will spontaneously abort as a result of the procedure. Only 1 in 800 pregnancies is an affected baby	3	1	73
G	17	A screening test similar to 15 above is in existence. It is proposed to increase the complexity of the screening test to increase the detection rate with targets for proportion of pregnancies screened and diagnostic tests carried out. Each extra case detected costs £5000; each affected individual costs the state £2 000 000 during their lifetime; a hip replacement operation costs £5000	10	11	54
	18	As 17 above but the cost/extra case detected is £100 000	6	10	58
	19	The government plans to introduce targets to ensure more women take the screening test for Down's syndrome. To achieve this it may be necessary to introduce directive counselling.	11	11	54

Table 1 [short version – may be more suitable for paper version of BMJ]
 Research Ethics committee members were asked to indicate their opinion of each scenario on a scale of 1 (totally ethical) – 5 (totally unethical)

Block	Q	Scenario Description [full question available on BMJ website]	Ethical?		
			Yes	??	No
A	1	Screen for a serious condition (Down's syndrome). No risk to unaffected fetus	43	11	21
	2	Screen for a serious condition: 1 unaffected fetus spontaneously aborted for every 2 affected fetuses diagnosed.	6	10	60
	3	Screen for a serious condition: 2 unaffected fetuses spontaneously aborted for every 1 affected fetus diagnosed.	5	2	69
B	4	Screen for red hair & freckles	5	3	68
	5	Screen for a life-threatening condition to allow surgery / neonatal intensive care when the baby is born.	73	2	2
C	6	Screen for reduction in life expectancy by 10 years.	4	7	66
	7	Screen for reduction in life expectancy by 10 years – will need drug therapy.	9	7	61
D	8	Screen for reduction in life expectancy by 50 years.	20	18	39
	9	Screen for reduction in life expectancy by 50 years: a cure is likely in the next 15 years.	16	18	43
E	10	Screen for slight lowering of education potential.	2	3	72
	11	Screen for moderate lowering of education potential.	1	6	70
	12	Screen for severe lowering of education potential.	5	11	61
F	13	Screen for severe lowering of education potential; 10% may have severe heart defect; others have life expectancy reduced by 10 years [Down's clinical description]. Only affected identified.	7	27	43
	14	As 13 above but the screening test identifies 60% of affected and 5% of unaffected pregnancies: No risk to unaffected.	14	19	43
	15	Screen for Down's clinical description: 1 unaffected fetus spontaneously aborted for every 2 affected fetuses diagnosed.	4	7	66
	16	Screen for a Down's clinical description: 2 unaffected fetuses spontaneously aborted for every 1 affected fetus diagnosed.	3	1	73
G	17	A screening test similar to 15 above is in existence. Do extra lab test. Each extra case detected costs £5000	10	11	54
	18	As 17 above but the cost / extra case detected is £100,000	6	10	58
	19	Add directive counselling to screening program.	11	11	54