Access to Pregnancy-Related Services: Public Health Ethics Issues

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Abstract and Keywords

Advancing fair access to evidence-based pregnancy-related services is a critical public health priority. It is widely recognized that there are inequalities in lifesaving interventions. This chapter however addresses issues raised by services whose value or utility are contested. Using illustrative examples of prenatal genetic testing and modes of childbirth, the chapter highlights the ways in which issues of access are complicated by social and cultural ideas about what is valued; discusses contested questions about what is ethically responsible or required of patients, providers, and public health systems in these reproductive health contexts; and addresses areas of needed research and further ethical analysis. It concludes that issues of access in pregnancy-related care must attend both to broad issues of justice and access and to particular ways that pregnancy services are valued, debated, and made available to women who might—or might not—benefit from them.

Keywords: pregnancy, childbirth, justice, prenatal genetic testing, reproductive health, public health ethics

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