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## CASE 3

### Cosmetic Embryo Selection

(*London Telegraph*)—Embryos are to be screened for a cosmetic defect for the first time in a British clinic.

Doctors have been given permission to create a baby free from a genetic disorder which would have caused the child to have a severe squint.

The Bridge Centre family clinic, in London, has been licensed to treat a businessman and his wife to create the baby. Both the businessman and his father suffer from the condition, which causes the eyes only to look downwards or sideways.

Critics have said that the permission is another step on the road to creating only perfect-looking babies in the laboratory.

The licence was granted by the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority (HFEA) to Prof. Geddis Grudzinskas, who believes the landmark ruling marks a shift away from granting licences only for life-threatening conditions.

He said: "We will increasingly see the use of embryo screening for severe cosmetic conditions."

He added that he would seek to screen for any genetic factor at all that would cause a family severe distress.

When asked if he would screen embryos for factors like hair colour, he said: "If there is a cosmetic aspect to an individual case I would assess it on its merits. [Hair colour] can be a cause of bullying which can lead to suicide. With the agreement of the HFEA, I would do it. If a parent suffered from asthma, and it was possible to detect the genetic factor for this, I would do it. It all depends on the family's distress."

He argued that a baby born with the squint condition, congenital fibrosis of the extra-macular muscles, would have to undergo several potentially dangerous operations from a young age....

If successful, the screening could be the first case in the world where doctors have been able to select embryos without the condition....

Until last year screening was restricted to life-threatening conditions such as cystic fibrosis or fatal blood disorders.\*

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*Should prospective parents be permitted to screen their embryos for cosmetic reasons? Is there a moral difference between embryo selection against severe disabilities and embryo selection against cosmetic imperfections that cause the child to suffer psychological distress or social discrimination? Is embryo selection for cosmetic reasons a form of discrimination or disrespect for people with disabilities or imperfections? Explain your answers.*



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