Author's response to reviews

Title: Controversies and considerations regarding termination of pregnancy for Fetal Anomalies in Islam

Authors:

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Author's response to reviews:

Authors’ Response to Reviewer’s Comments
Title: Controversies and considerations regarding termination of pregnancy for Fetal Anomalies in Islam
Version: 2
Date: 24 July 2013
Reviewer: Gamal I Serour
Reviewer’s report:

General Comments:

The authors are very pleased to note Dr Gamal Serour has reviewed their manuscript and thank him for his insightful suggestions and comments which has helped the authors improve their manuscript immensely.

We have now revised the manuscript based on both referees comments and we hope the manuscript is now in order and acceptable for publication.

Specific Comments
Reviewer’s Comment no. 1
1- Some of the changes as indicated in the text.
Authors’ response:

The authors have not received the amended text nevertheless have made extensive changes to the text following the other referee’s comments. We therefore hope the present version is acceptable.

Reviewer’s Comment no. 2
2- For International Journal the authors should not restrict their evidence to one Institute (Islamic Fiqh council of Mecca). They should also include other credible sources of Islamic Jurisprudence such as Al Azhar and International Islamic Center for Population Studies and Research.
Authors’ response:
The authors have included the views of about 5 institutions including those of Al Azhar and the Iranian Parliament, in addition to Saudi and International Sunni institutions.

Reviewer’s Comment no. 3
3- References 19, 20 are not the correct reference and should be replaced by references to the Grand Sheikh of Al Azhar as cited in the text.
Authors’ response:
The authors have now amended the above references as appropriate.

Reviewer’s Comment no. 4
Authors’ response:
The authors have complied this is request.

Reviewer’s Comment no. 5
5- The discussion should include paragraph on: conscientious objection to treatment. The author can refer to FIGO ethical guidelines on this subject
Authors’ response:
The authors have included this aspect in the Discussion section.

Reviewer: Alison R G Shaw

1. Authors’ General Comments
The authors consider themselves very fortunate and were indeed very pleased Dr Alison RG Shaw has reviewed their manuscript. Her comments, suggestions and call for bold statements were complied with as best as the authors could. In response to the Reviewer’s request the authors have again conducted extensive literature search and incorporated over 20 additional references to revise the manuscript. This effort hopefully has helped improve the quality, the usefulness of the manuscript and has improved the clarity of the message the authors wish to convey. The Reviewer have asked that bold statements be included so as to address the problem at hand. The authos have tried their best to comply in spite
of the enormous sensitivity of the topic discussed and the potential pitfall to authors. The authors have tried to revise the manuscript in the strongest language possible.

Reviewer's report and the authors' response to the same

Reviewer comment no. 1:
The argument is important, as are the recommendations. However, I recommend that the authors restructure the paper in order to make their case more strongly, and in order that their recommendations clearly arise from empirical evidence and ethical reasoning.

Authors' response:
Thank you. We think so too. We have now included empirical evidence and ethical reasoning to make the argument and language much stronger.

Reviewer comment no. 2:
There are also a number of grammatical and phrasing errors that need correcting.

Authors' response:
The final draft manuscript was copy-edited professionally by an American company handling such matters.

Reviewer comment no. 3:
A clearer statement of the argument and of how the paper is organised is needed paragraph 2.

Authors' response:
The authors have made the statements clear in the introduction section. The organization of the manuscript is given in the last paragraph of the introduction section.

Reviewer comment no. 4:
The authors say there are two main sects in Islam, but they should then say what the relevance of this is for their paper .............

Authors' response:
This paper has highlighted the large disparity in Islamic thinking on TOP, irrespective of sect, suggesting the need for Muslim nations to collectively resolve the issue of abortion in Islam for a common stand. This has been mentioned in the manuscript. This paper has discussed relationship between religious edicts and the law.

Reviewer comment no. 5:
...... Then in the conclusion the authors can offer their recommendation (which
they say is their “opinion” – but a recommendation that arises from ethical reasoning would make for a much stronger argument.) In the recommendation section they could reiterate why making this recommendation is important.

Authors’ response:

This “Conclusions” section has been amended accordingly

Reviewer comment no. 6:

The section reviewing the Islamic edicts and current rulings provides important context for the discussion of the Saudi position, and I think it might be useful to have a summary of the current rulings worldwide including in Saudi Arabia – in this section. Perhaps these could be presented in box or table format. There was a review in 2007 of this broader context in Al Akeel Nature Genetics, 39:11:1293-6 (Islamic ethical framework for research into and prevention of genetic diseases).

Authors’ response:

“Summary“ tables have been prepared.

Reviewer comment no. 7-9:

The discussion at present raises a number of important practical and ethical issues alongside the authors’ opinions. I think it would be better to have separate sections, one detailing the practical and moral issues and another presenting the recommendations. The section on the practical and ethical issues would include the point that, at, present, only a fraction of all possible abnormalities are detectable by early prenatal diagnosis.

The important point about medical practitioners calculating pregnancy from the first day of the last period, and the Islamic calculations being from time of fertilization – is another practical issue – that should be identified as such - prior to the recommendations. The authors do say e.g. that providers must “bear in mind” this issue of competing calculations of pregnancy - but this could be said more strongly in a separate paragraph on recommendations.

Separate section on recommendations: Currently, in the 2nd para of discussion the authors identify the “grey area” in Islamic interpretations, and in the same paragraph “urge” Islamic jurists to consider abortion after 120 days of
fertilization – I think the identification of the ethical issues associated with the grey area should be separated from the recommendation. If the ethical reasoning that leads to the recommendation is set out first, the recommendations will have stronger force - and be more effective than as a list of points made across 6 paragraphs (begins in para 4 and ends in para 9) of the discussion.

Authors’ response:

Agreed and have separated practical and moral issues with that of recommendations.
A separate section now deals with calculating pregnancy.