

# *Journal of Theoretics*

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## **Genetic Discrimination**

It may seem like science fiction but genetic discrimination has already started. Today, some insurance companies, employers, and others can check your DNA to see if you have a genetic predisposition for certain diseases that may financially affect them in the future. Diseases such as Tay-Sachs and cystic fibrosis are currently being screened for by some insurance companies when people apply for health or life insurance. Even if you don't have either of these diseases and will never get them, if you carry the trait for either of these autosomal recessive diseases you may be denied family health insurance since your insured children may get the disease (there is a 25% chance if your spouse also has the trait).

Most diseases though are multifactorial and require more than just a genetic predisposition for the disease to occur. But even if you only have the genetic potential for a disease, such as heart disease or depression, you can be denied insurance or employment...and it is currently legal!

Everyone carries the genetic predisposition for at least a few diseases and as we learn more about the human genome, this number will increase. But even with a genetic predisposition towards dozens of diseases, very few, if any of those predispositions will become manifest. That is because most diseases are multifactorial. For instance, there is a genetic predisposition to heart disease, but except for rare familial mutations, this genetic predisposition needs at least a couple "cofactors" such as high cholesterol, hypertension, endothelial disease, increased platelet aggregation, smoking, sedentary lifestyle, and so on. For many diseases it is only a small percentage of people with a particular genetic predisposition that will actually get it. So for most diseases, it does not make economic or scientific sense to use a person's DNA to determine if they should get insurance or be employed.

A person can not change their DNA anymore than someone can change their race or sex. Discrimination based upon race, sex, or DNA is obviously wrong and just another form of bigotry. What's next, do we not allow these people to have families so they can't pass on their genetics? Maybe that person with the genetic predisposition for depression also has the genetic predisposition to find the cure for cancer or develop a unified field theory. Even if they don't, maybe their child or grandchild will do such great things. When we start selecting out certain genes there will be unintended consequences that we can not afford as a civilized society (see the editorial "[The Genetic Extinction of Man](#)", Journal of Theoretics Vol.5-5).

Even if the genetic discrimination by an insurer or prospective employer did make a company more profitable, it would only be at the expense of the public at large. Such a practice would also ultimately lead to a government run health care system, which will not be innovative, responsive, or cutting-edge. Also genetic research relies on people freely donating samples of their DNA, which would virtually stop if such discrimination was allowed to occur.

In the United States the Senate passed the Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act of 2003 (S. 1053) on October 14, 2003 by a vote of 95-0 but it is still waiting to be picked up by the House. If it is not passed by the House of Representatives, then the bill will die, even though President Bush has said that he would sign it into law if passed. For those who wish to let Speaker of the House Congressman J. Dennis Hastert know that you want the Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act to be taken up by the House of Representatives and passed, you can email him your comments at [dhastert@mail.house.gov](mailto:dhastert@mail.house.gov) .

So if you want to decrease your quality of and access to health care, see the destruction of medical research as we know it, and possibly cause the stagnation and fall of civilization, then do nothing. But if you want to do what is right, just, and logical, then work to enact genetic information antidiscrimination laws in your country.

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