



Our Genes / Our Choices

Who Gets to Know?



What's all the fuss about with genetic tests? Supreme Court Justice Stephen Breyer and commissioner of the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission Paul Miller debate whether genetic tests are different from other medical tests.

STEPHEN BREYER:

From what I've heard so far, I don't see the difference between the genetic test for the child and all the other tests that they perform. Well, from what I've heard so far, the only thing this genetic test does is it tells you if there's a higher risk of getting a certain small number of diseases. Well, all those other tests do the same.

PAUL MILLER:

No, there's...a big difference.

STEPHEN BREYER:

Well, that's what I didn't hear.

PAUL MILLER:

I think there's a big difference between a genetic test and all the other medical tests. Because the medical tests examine and describe the current state of health of that child as it is today. A genetic test is, and this is why people are so concerned with genetics, an attempt to look into some fuzzy crystal ball and to make a guess about what that future may be.