

Scenario 1

Genetic Screening

A mutation in a gene that causes deafness has recently been identified. A number of employers in the airline industry are concerned about this finding and want to screen prospective new employees for carrier status of the 'D' allele. They will refuse to employ people as pilots or flight attendants who might be adversely affected by the pressure changes associated with flying since they are concerned about the safety of their employees and customers, and possible litigation issues.

The issue

Should employers be allowed to screen potential employees using this genetic test?

Questions

Here are some questions for you to consider in responding to the issue.

1. What would be the advantages of screening for carrier status by the employer?
2. What would be the disadvantages? Consider both the advantages and disadvantages from the perspective of everyone involved.
3. Would you agree to a pre-employment test? Give reasons for your answer.
4. Would it be a good social policy to have compulsory pre-employment screening for carrier status for this gene?