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Australian Medical Association



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Paternity Testing Ban Call

The Australian Medical Association has written to Federal Attorney-General Daryl Williams demanding a ban on DNA paternity testing over the Internet until strict regulations are put in place, according to an article in the latest edition of Australian Medicine.

A Melbourne-based company, DNA Solutions is offering paternity tests to customers who send in hair samples for DNA testing.

AMA Vice President Dr Trevor Mudge said it was extraordinary that such tests were allowed to take place without regulations covering privacy, consent, counselling or 'chain of evidence'.

Dr Mudge said studies previously conducted had cast significant biological doubt on presumptive fatherhood.

"If you start to decode it all, one in five children might find out their father is not who they think he is," Dr Mudge said. "The potential for social disruption is enormous."

In the letter to Mr Williams, Dr Mudge asked for immediate legislation to ban the tests.

"There should be legislation to prohibit it until regulations are in place to ensure it is offered in a framework that is sensitive to the needs and circumstances of the families concerned," Dr Mudge said.

As far as the AMA was concerned there were three main issues:

- The chain of evidence – how do you know who the hair came from?
- Privacy of genetic information and informed consent.

- The need for adequate counselling, not just for the father, but also the child and possibly the mother as well.

"The effect of this kind of information can be quite explosive for the families concerned," Dr Mudge said.

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