

NIPT and beyond

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Maternal plasma cell-free (cf)DNA screening testing for common aneuploidies has much higher screening performance than conventional methods. However, financial restraints have severely limited availability in the public health sector. Compromise strategies have been proposed whereby testing is carried out selectively on women found to be at high or borderline risk based on conventional testing. Cost-benefit analysis supports such strategies, at least as an interim approach. But it can be argued that more effort should be made to either reduce the unit cost of cfDNA tests or make more efficient use of the expensive laboratory equipment needed, by scaling up. Alternatively, public health decision makers will need to find the additional funds - new money - to provide universal screening which will be recouped by consequent, albeit long term, financial savings.