

What do our medical students know about cell free DNA testing?

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Background: Cell free DNA (cfDNA) testing is available for more than 10 years now. But it can still be considered as a novel technology. Therefore we wanted to know how information about this testing method is implemented in the education of our medical students.

Methods: questionnaire survey. Last year medical students (N=96) were asked (during their Obstetrics and Gynecology lessons) about their knowledge of cfDNA testing.

Results: All of the students (100 %) had some knowledge about the method. Nearly all of them (99 %) knew about the possibility to use it to detect fetuses with chromosomal anomalies. They also mostly had a good idea about the accuracy or sensitivity of the method. But about half of the students would define it as diagnostic rather than a screening test or they did not know. They learned about cfDNA testing in Medical Biology and Obstetrics and Gynecology courses. None of the students mentioned the possibility to use cell free DNA testing in oncology.

Conclusion: From the point of view of a Obstetrics and Gynecology teacher we can be satisfied with knowledge our 6th year medical students have of the use of cfDNA testing in prenatal diagnosis. But we should emphasize that it is still a screening not a diagnostic method.