Good Question
An Exploration in Ethics Series

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A series presented by the Kenan Institute for Ethics at Duke University
As a child, Sara Kantari can remember sitting at the dinner table as her older sister explained the Penuett square, a diagram used to predict genetic outcomes. Kantari was enthralled with the idea of using mathematics to help predict and refine biological science. She would go on to study biological sciences in college, but it was her minor in philosophy that would eventually guide her to view the application of science through an ethical lens. Armed with a Master of Science degree in Medical Genetics with Immunology from Brunel University, Kantari spent her early career in criminal forensics, just as DNA testing was gaining public recognition in high profile cases. While her work was socially rewarding, it was emotionally difficult to work with violent cases and frustrated her knack for solving a case scientifically, but not allowed the protocol to do so.

She then landed briefly at a biotech firm before joining the DNA Diagnostic Laboratory at Johns Hopkins University. At the lab, she was able to apply her skills to medical diagnostics, particularly to diagnose disease, particularly in prenatal cases. At that time, she began sitting in on Federal level policy meetings as the lab representative, sparking a new interest in science policy.

Researching and thinking through genetic testing policy, Kantari's interest lies in medical diagnostics, challenging her in new ways, leading her to collaborate with the Genomics and Public Policy Center at Johns Hopkins. She eventually joined the Center full-time as a genetics policy analyst. At the time, many in the center were active in helping form what would become the Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act of 2008, which protects genetic information disclosure in employment and health insurance. At that time, the Combined DNA Index System (CODIS) database for criminal justice DNA profiles was expanding, and Kantari was the only member of the Center's team with a background.

At the Center and as she transitioned to Duke in 2009, Kantari analyzed national and state policies on direct-to-consumer genetic testing, scribingcollection of DNA, familial searching of CODIS, and collection of DNA from arrestees. Some of the states that collect DNA from arrestees will expunge the data falling conviction, but other states may retain the data in the database. While this was upheld by a Supreme Court case in 2013, she appeals for real and informed public decision making on these issues at stake.

As she was preparing to continue her work in policy research at Duke, she met with the former head of the FBI's DNA lab, who was just transitioning into academia himself. In their conversation, he identified a policy gap around use of DNA for human trafficking. DNA had a utility to help, and the forensic science and CODIS database both had developed greatly, but the policy and privacy implications had not been considered. Kantari has since worked to unite these difficult issues while at Duke, now working with the Science and Society Initiative.
As a child, Sara Kantas can remember sitting at the dinner table as her older sister explained the Punnett square, a diagram used to predict genetic outcomes. Kantas was enthralled with the idea of using mathematics to help predict and refine biological science.

She would go on to study biological sciences in college, but it was her minor in philosophy that would eventually guide her to view the application of science through an ethical lens. Armed with a Master of Science degree in Medical Genetics with Immunology from Brunel University, Kantas spent her early career in criminal forensics, just as DNA testing was gaining public recognition in high profile cases. While her work was socially rewarding, it was emotionally difficult to work with violent cases and frustrat ing to know how to solve a case scientifically, but not allowed the protocol to do so.

She then landed briefly at a biotech firm before joining the DNA Diagnostic Laboratory at Johns Hopkins University. At the lab, she was able to apply her years of experience in crime scene forensics to diagnose disease, particularly in prenatal cases.

At that time, she began sitting on Federal level policy meetings as the lab representative, sparking a new interest in science policy.

Researching and thinking through genetic testing policy, Kantas knew that her expertise in medical diagnostics, challenged her in new ways, leading her to collaborate with the Centers and Public Policy Center at Johns Hopkins. She eventually joined the Center full-time as a genetics policy analyst. At the time, many in the Center were active in helping form what would become the Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act of 2008, which prohibits genetic information discrimination in employment and health insurance.

At the same time, the Combined DNA Index System (CODIS) database for criminal justice DNA profiles was expanding, and Kantas was the only member of the Center’s team with a background.
As a child, Sana Kantesar can remember sitting at the dinner table as her older sister explained the Punnett square, a diagram used to predict genetic outcomes. Kantesar was enthralled with the idea of using mathematics to help predict and refine biological science.

She would go on to study biological sciences in college, but it was her mentor in philosophy who would eventually guide her to view the application of science through an ethical lens. Armed with a Master of Science degree in Medical Genetics with Immunology from Brunel University, Kantesar spent her early career in criminal forensics, just as DNA testing was gaining public recognition in high profile cases. While her work was socially rewarding, it was emotionally difficult to work with violent cases and frustrating to know how to solve a case scientifically, but not allowed the protocol to do so.

She then landed briefly at a biotech firm before joining the DNA Diagnostic Laboratory at Johns Hopkins University. At the lab, she was able to apply her skills to identify and diagnose disease, particularly in prenatal cases. At that time, she began sitting on Federal level policy meetings as the lab representative, sparking a new interest in science policy.

Researching and thinking through genetic testing policy, first in forensics then in medical diagnostics, challenged her in new ways, leading her to collaborate with the Genomics and Public Policy Center at Johns Hopkins. She eventually joined the Center full-time as a genetics policy analyst. At the time, many in the Center were active in helping form what would become the Genetic Information Non-Discrimination Act of 2008, which prohibits genetic information discrimination in employment and health insurance.

At the same time, the Combined DNA Index System (CODIS) databases for criminal justice DNA profiles was expanding, and Kantesar was the only member of the Center's team with a forensics background.

At the Center and as she transitioned to Duke in 2009, she analyzed national and state policies on direct-to-consumer genetic testing, stewardship of public data, and familial searching of CODIS, and collection of DNA from arrestees. Some of the states that collect DNA from arrestees will expunge the data following conviction, but states may retain the data in the database. While this was upheld by a Supreme Court case in 2013, it appeals for real and informed public discussion on the ethics at stake.

As she was preparing to continue her work in policy research at Duke, she met with the former head of the FBI's DNA lab, who was just transitioning into academia himself. In their conversation, he identified a policy gap around use of DNA for human trafficking. DNA had a utility to help, and the forensic science and CODIS database both had developed greatly, but the policy and privacy implications had not been considered.

Kantesar has been working to untangle these difficult issues while at Duke, now working with the Science and Society Initiative.
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AS SCIENTIFIC TECHNOLOGIES CONTINUE TO DEVELOP, NEW HUMAN RIGHTS APPLICATIONS BECOME A REALITY.