

Rising Number of Brits Coming to U.S. to Choose Gender of Baby

The number of couples traveling from Britain to the United States in order to have sex-selective IVF treatment is rising by 20 percent every year, a fertility doctor reports.

Dr. Daniel Potter, who heads a large clinic in California, said that eight in 10 couples from Britain are choosing to have a girl.

The treatment, costing around £7,600 (about \$12,950), involves making embryos that are screened to determine the gender before being implanted in the womb.

Under the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act, sex selection for social or family balancing reasons is prohibited in the U.K.

Potter is now visiting Britain to “educate” the public on sex selection, saying he is here to “explain the process and address some of the misconceptions surrounding the treatment.”

He said: “I believe women should have reproductive freedom and that should include selecting the gender of their child if they wish.”

An editorial in *The Daily Telegraph* warned that the rise in numbers of couples traveling abroad for this treatment “shows that lawmakers need to remain watchful.”

It said, “tinkering with embryos can be made to sound eminently reasonable.”

“In future, parents doubtless will assert a right to ensure that their child is not born with a particular chromosomal

disorder, and it will be hard to deny them.

“Yet it is also easy to see how this could shade into dictating certain traits—intelligence, appearance, gender—and discriminating against others,” the editorial added.

And columnist Daniel Finkelstein called the practice of using IVF—in-vitro fertilization—to choose the sex of a child “dangerous, obnoxious and unnecessary.”

Writing in *The Times*, he commented: “Let’s start with dangerous. It is obviously a threat to mankind if societies are heavily biased to one sex.”

“As for obnoxious—children are not consumer goods or designer accessories. You shouldn’t pick the gender of your child like you pick the color of your motor vehicle,” he continued.

Finkelstein added that the practice is unnecessary, because “for most people, most of the time” having a strong preference on whether their child is a boy or a girl “does not persist” after the baby is born.