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Information on parentage examinations

(proof of paternity or other family relation)

1. Goal of the report

With the help of the parentage report, it is possible nowadays to prove paternity without a trace of doubt. Either the examined man (putative father) can be ruled out as father of the child or, if he cannot be excluded, the probability of this man being the child's father can be determined with the help of biostatistical methods. Further family relationships can be examined, too (e.g. proof of siblings). The chances of success depend on the respective group constellation.

In addition, other family relationships can also be investigated (e.g., sibling relationships). The likelihood of success depends on the specific family structure.

2. Ordering

In case of a lawsuit the competent court orders a parentage report ("expert opinion based on a court mandate"). Private persons can also order a parentage report without the participation of a court (the so-called "out-of-court report"). As the involvement in such out-of-court reports is entirely voluntary, a written consent by the participating parties is always required. As far as minors are concerned, all custodians must approve.

3. Parentage experts and guidelines

According to the Law on Genetic Diagnostics, the relevant laboratories must be accredited since the 1 February 2011. In addition, on July, 2012 the Gendiagnostik Kommission at the Robert Koch Institute published the "Guidelines for the requirements regarding genetic analyses to prove parentage and regarding the qualification of medical and non-medical experts" to section 23 (2) no 4 and 2b GenDG (www.rki.de). These prerequisites guarantee a consistent standard, which the experts should express verbally, too. This is the only way to ensure the validity of the results at court.

The German parentage experts are organised within the German Society for Parentage Verification. A list of qualified experts is available under www.kfqa.de.

4. Examination material

For DNA reports, mouth mucosa smears are used as examination material. It is not necessary to take a blood sample. With the help of a swab, mouth mucosa samples are taken from the involved parties (usually mother, child and putative father).

5. Ensuring the identity of the involved parties

The samples may only be taken by authorised persons and not by the involved parties themselves. A form is used to record the sample collection and proof of identity in detail. These forms are supplemented with a photograph of the individuals involved and signed. Fingerprints are also taken from all adults.

According to the Law on Genetic Diagnostics, the involved parties must be informed about all relevant details and they must sign a declaration of consent. If minors are involved, the written consent of all custodians is required. Legal custody must be specified in the application (for out-of-court paternity tests)

Die Materialentnahme darf nur von autorisierten Stellen, nicht von den Beteiligten selbst vorgenommen werden. Auf einem Formblatt werden die Probenentnahme und der Identitätsnachweis ausführlich protokolliert. Diese Formblätter werden mit einem Foto der beteiligten Personen ergänzt und unterschrieben. Von allen volljährigen Personen wird zusätzlich ein Fingerabdruck angefertigt.

Laut Gendiagnostikgesetz müssen die Beteiligten vor der Untersuchung über die Probenentnahme und die Verwendung der Proben aufgeklärt werden und eine Einverständniserklärung unterzeichnen. Bei minderjährigen Kindern ist die Zustimmung **aller** Sorgeberechtigten erforderlich. Die Sorgeberechtigung ist im Antrag anzugeben (bei außergerichtlichen Abstammungsuntersuchungen).

If an out-of-court report has been drawn up, we will keep the "Record of sampling and proof of identity" in order to be able to prove the identity of the examined party in case of doubt. All data are treated confidentially.

6. Evaluation of hereditary traits (DNA report)

The parentage report deals with hereditary traits. They remain the same all through life (except with stem cell transplants) and are not subject to modification due to illness or other influences. The DNA (genetic substance), which contains all nucleated body cells, is examined. With children it is not necessary to adhere to a certain age limit, because the DNA traits are fully developed when the child is born.

The child gets half of the hereditary traits from its mother and the other half from its father. Based on the information about the mother's hereditary traits, one can identify the child's traits inherited by its father. Then the man (putative father) is checked on these traits. If there is evidence of these hereditary traits, the man cannot be ruled out as being the child's father. The concurrence of the rare hereditary traits is evaluated statistically. If, however, the examined man does not show the hereditary traits in question, he can certainly be ruled out as father of the child.

7. What makes the judgement safe

With the methods at hand practically any paternity case can be solved. Either the examined man is ruled out as the child's father or paternity can be proved with a very high degree of certainty (99.9 %). According to the guidelines a man is not the child's father if four or more of the examined traits on different chromosomes rule out paternity. As there is no positive proof of paternity (disqualification system!), the probability of paternity with the relevant persons is calculated based on how many times a hereditary trait has occurred. If the figure is above 99.9 %, paternity is practically proved. A correct judgement on the relevant person can be limited by a blood relationship between the mother and the examined man (e.g. if the putative father is the uncle or grandfather of the child) or if several closely related men (e.g. brothers or cousins) are possible fathers. It might then be necessary to examine the person related to the putative father.

8. Two-person report

The child has got half of the hereditary traits from its mother and the other half from its father. In some cases it is possible to prove parentage without the participation of the mother. Since without the mother there is no information as to which traits have been inherited from the father's side, more examinations must be made. The costs could therefore be higher.

So-called secret reports, without one of the parents entitled to custody knowing about it, are not carried out.

9. Deficiency cases

If a putative father cannot be reached or is already dead, we talk about deficiency cases. Parentage can possibly be proved by including blood relations. Material of dead bodies can also contribute to furnish proof. In such cases it is recommended to contact the laboratory prior to requesting a report in order to obtain proper advice.

10. Procedure for parentage report

In the case of a court order you will receive a letter with an appointment for mouth mucosa sampling from either our Institute or any other body you have chosen.

With out-of-court reports, please ask for an application form by calling or writing to us. You can also find it on our website and print it out. After having returned the signed form including the approval of all parties involved, you will receive an appointment for sampling.

Usually the mouth mucosa smearing will be taken at the Institute for Forensic Medicine in Dresden. If you prefer, it can be taken at your general practitioner's, at your local public health department or at another institution. We ask you to inform us about the address of the doctor, so that we can send them the necessary material. Choosing a location other than our Institute will involve additional costs. Please also bring a current photo.

It takes about one week after receipt of the material to carry out the examinations and finish the report.

To ensure quality, the laboratory is regularly inspected by the Deutsche Akkreditierungsstelle (DAKKS).

The costs for a three-person-report is €495 (plus VAT).

Out-of-court reports are sent to the given address by registered letter or handed out to all parties involved only after the invoice has been transferred in full.

For reasons of data protection, we will not give you any information about the examination results on the phone. However, we will be glad to answer any methodical or organisational questions. In that case please contact the DNA laboratory:

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E-Mail: REM.Serologie@uniklinikum-dresden.de

Contact for specialist information:

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