

Brian Salter and Manooreh Saniei – The New World of Medically Assisted Reproduction and Ethical Governance in the Muslim Middle East: Establishing a Robust Network

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In the Muslim Middle East, the growth of assisted reproductive technologies (ARTs) has not been accompanied by the creation of comprehensive guidelines and regulations. In this region, any method of medically reproductive assistance is consistently governed by Islamic law. Given divergent sectarian perspectives among Sunni and Shi'a Muslims, there are various approaches to ARTs. Sunni religious authorities banned all forms of ARTs involving third-party donors, due to their strict faith regarding incest and biological lineage. Nevertheless, Shi'a Muslims hold more progressive opinions on gametes and embryo donation, and gestational surrogacy. Despite this conflict of beliefs, two Shi'a dominant countries, Iran and Lebanon, supply the donor technology for infertile couples from both Shi'a and Sunni sectors in the Middle East.

This project aims to build an international network of humanities scholars, social scientists, bioethicists, policy-makers, regulators, scientists, and other stakeholders, to understand the key debates on the ethics and governance of ARTs in this region. It will lay the groundwork for a future large grant application by building an international and collaborative network to explore the global and regional perspectives about how to develop more authoritative and efficient ethical governance of the new ARTs in this geo-politically important region.