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## Attitudes towards mandatory national premarital screening for hereditary hemolytic disorders

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### Abstract

#### Background

A compulsory national premarital screening (PMS) program for hereditary hemoglobinopathies was established in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) in February 2004. Termination of pregnancy of affected fetuses is not widely acceptable. Many couples decide to get married regardless of the result. A trend towards coercive interference with this decision is emerging.

#### Objectives

To examine the attitude of young educated individuals regarding the national PMS program and its implementation.

#### Methods

Eight hundred university students (aged 18–29) filled in a self-administered structured questionnaire. Data were analyzed using the EPI Info Statistical Package version 6. A *P*-value <0.05 was considered significant.

#### Results

Most students favor the PMS program but there were concerns regarding mandating the testing and interference with individual decision making. Significantly more women favored testing and coercive interference with the decision to marry.

#### Conclusions

Further public education and wide spread genetic counseling prior to testing is essential for the success of the program. Screening singles on admission to university prior to any commitment may be preferable

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than screening immediately before the marriage certificate is issued.

**Keywords:** [Premarital](#), [Screening](#), [Attitudes](#), [Hemoglobinopathies](#)

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