Amniocentesis during the second trimester of pregnancy has been performed for genetic reasons since the 1960s. The most common indications for genetic amniocentesis include advance maternal age, abnormal serum screening (triple screen), and abnormal fetal ultrasound. Genetic amniocentesis is preceded by detailed genetic counseling that outlines potential risks and benefits of the procedure. A woman (or a couple) then chooses whether or not to have the procedure based on the information presented. Few studies have evaluated the impact of racial-ethnic differences on utilization of prenatal diagnostic tests. Most of these studies have focused on barriers to prenatal diagnosis in Hispanic and African-American populations. Little research has been performed on the utilization of prenatal diagnostic tests in other racial-ethnic groups, specifically the Asian racial-ethnic group.

The aim of our study was to explore the decision-making processes of Asian women offered amniocentesis in comparison to the decision-making processes of women of other racial-ethnic groups (Caucasian, African-American, and Hispanic). Specific factors, including demographic information, knowledge about genetic amniocentesis, and health beliefs, were assessed to analyze the decision-making processes of these women. We hypothesized that Asian women would differ from the other racial-ethnic groups in their health beliefs and that this difference would explain the differing rates of amniocentesis acceptance seen between the racial-ethnic groups.
A total of 157 questionnaires were collected. The amniocentesis acceptance rates of each racial-ethnic group were Asian (82.8%), Caucasian (84.0%), African-American (82.9%), and Hispanic (51.5%). We found that an individual’s perception of the benefits of amniocentesis, her perception of the seriousness of the disorder, and her knowledge of the amniocentesis procedure played a larger role in the decision-making process than her race/ethnicity. Among those women who accepted amniocentesis, differences in perceived seriousness were found between Caucasian women and Asian women, as well as between Caucasian women and African-American women. Differences were also found in knowledge of the amniocentesis procedure between Caucasian women and Hispanic women.