

## LETTER

# Reply to C Harling

*European Journal of Human Genetics* (2017) **25**, 1030; doi:10.1038/ejhg.2017.89; published online 31 May 2017

We appreciate the comments provided by C Harling on our published article<sup>1</sup> describing the existing legal approaches regarding the rights of minors to consent to healthcare interventions, including how laws in the 28 member states of the European Union and in Canada consider competent minors. We agree with the nuances provided by C Harling. We understand that England and Wales have a mixed approach, where the age for capacity to consent to healthcare interventions is fixed at 16, but younger patients who, in the view of the treating physician, have sufficient maturity and intelligence to understand fully what is proposed can also provide consent (Gillick competence). As a matter of fact, this nuance was clearly included in the Supplementary Information that accompanies our manuscript, and is available online at <http://www.nature.com/ejhg/journal/v24/n11/supinfo/ejhg201661s1.html>.

In addition, this nuance was also included in the Table 2 of our manuscript. However, due to a misunderstanding on submission, Table 2 was printed with errors. As a result, the legal situation in England and Wales appeared both under the approach of a legally fixed age and under the mixed approach. We apologise for this misunderstanding, and we are grateful that the journal has offered us the opportunity to publish the correct version of Table 2.

In our article in *EJHG*, the objective was to indicate whether, and, if so, from what age, minors can provide lawful consent to healthcare

interventions, including to NGS performed for diagnostic purposes. Our aim was not to offer an in-depth explanation of each national legal framework, but rather to highlight the general legal context. Acknowledging that it would not be possible to present, in our manuscript, an in-depth analysis of all legal complexities surrounding the concept of mature minors in each of the countries under study, we have instead included the relevant nuances and exceptions in the Supplementary Information. We therefore invite the readers who want more information on the legal details to have a look at the Supplementary Information that accompanies our manuscript, which is available online.

## CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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1 Sénécal K, Thys K, Vears DF, Van Assche K, Knoppers BM, Borry P: Legal approaches regarding health-care decisions involving minors: implications for next-generation sequencing. *Eur J Hum Genet* 2016; **25**: 658.