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## Three Things You Should Know About Egg “Donation”\*

### 1. Egg Donation Often Involves Coercion

- Egg donors are recruited through ads in online classifieds, social media, and college newspapers, offering anywhere from \$5,000 to \$100,000. These ads rarely if ever make any mention of the potential health risks involved, nor do they reveal that no long-term studies have ever been conducted. Such information is essential for decision-making and consent to be truly and fully informed.
- Egg donation often involves poorer women providing eggs to wealthier couples. The unequal power dynamics of poverty and wealth are inherently coercive.
- Unlike women receiving fertility treatment, egg donors are rarely considered patients and as a result often receive inadequate care and attention. However, because egg donors are dealing with medical personnel in a clinical setting, they frequently fail to understand upfront that they are not patients, and thus enter into egg donation arrangements on terms that are less than fully understood.
- Unlike organ donation, where compensation is not allowed because of the real concern that people will assume undue risks to their health because of financial need, the egg donor—even when informed of known risks and potential unknown risks—is often willing to risk to her health because of financial need. Money plays a very coercive and powerful role in the market of human egg donation.

### 2. Egg Donation Carries Health and Psychological Risks that Often Go Untold

- Most concerning is that to date there has been no major peer-reviewed medical research on the long-term effects of egg harvesting on the health of the young women who provide their eggs. This makes it impossible for women to give true meaningful informed consent relative to the health and psychological risks involved.
- Without studying women who donate their eggs over the course of their lifetime, there is little empirical data on the risks these women have later in life with issues of their own fertility, developing cancers, psychological consequences of their decision, or any other negative impact egg donation had on their life.
- Of the medical complications that are known, they are rarely documented in the medical literature, as the individuals and organizations that are tasked with safety and oversight are also the ones who stand to profit from egg donation.
- Unlike those who donate organs or blood, there is no requirement to track these women in a central database. Once the extraction is over, the women are forgotten; no records or information about them or where their eggs went exists.
- The medical process required for egg retrieval is lengthy and there are known medical risks associated with each step. Risks include Ovarian Hyper Stimulation syndrome (OHSS) due to superovulation, loss of fertility, ovarian torsion, stroke, kidney disease, premature menopause, ovarian cysts, and in some rare cases, death.
- Lupron, a drug commonly used in the first step of the egg donation process to stop ovarian function and thus medically induce menopause before hyperstimulation of the ovaries, is a synthetic hormone that are not approved by the FDA for use in fertility treatment. It has a Category X rating, which means if a woman gets pregnant while taking the drug there will be harm to the developing fetus. This is extremely concerning with respect to egg donors who are very fertile and may not be compliant with instructions not to be sexually active during ovarian stimulation.
- When an egg donor experiences harm to her health, she often feels guilty for “being so stupid” for making a decision that brought about this harm. She feels used by those she thought were professionals who cared for her.
- Children born by donor eggs are either never told this important detail or have no way of knowing who their genetic mother is. The secrets around anonymous conception is troublesome to many and only know are we seeing these people organize and demand to have access to this important and personal information.

### 3. Egg Donation is Often Eugenic

- Ads commonly target specific racial, physical, and intellectual characteristics—giving parents the opportunity (or at least the illusion that they may be able) to create a custom-made, designer child.
- Eggs with less desirable traits that are deemed unwanted are often used for scientific research, creating a new market of abuse of poor and uneducated women. Their eggs are adequate for research purposes but not baby making.
- The largest sums of money are generally offered for donors of very specific educational, physical, or ethnic traits, not only perpetuating but actually incentivizing—literally paying more for—traits that a couple or an individual desires.

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\*The language of the very few laws in the U.S. on egg "donation" state that the woman is being compensated for her time and effort, and that the eggs are in fact a donation.