

Three Things You Should Know About Sperm “Donation”ⁱ

1. Sperm Donation Poses Psychological and Health Risks to Donor Conceived Children

- Children conceived via sperm donation overwhelmingly agree that their biological father is half of who they are. Many of them agree that the circumstances of their conception bother them.ⁱⁱ
- Research indicates that donor offspring are more likely to suffer with depression and substance abuse than children reared by their biological parents. They are more likely to become donors themselves in an effort to “pay it forward.”
- Sperm donors do not undergo extensive medical testing prior to donating, which means they may pass on genetic diseases to their potential offspring, even though in theory those buying sperm are told they are buying sperm from “healthy” donors to prevent “unfit” or “unwanted” children. Furthermore, children conceived through their sperm will have no access to important, perhaps life saving, medical information from/about their sperm donor.
- There is little to no regulation over how many times a man can donate or how many children may be conceived from his donations, potentially creating many dozens, even hundreds of unknown children and half siblings.
- Anonymity combined with Genetic Sexual Attraction (the possibility of attraction between close relatives who first meet as adults) creates potential for people to unknowingly become sexually intimate with a sibling, cousin, etc.
- Young adult children born via anonymous sperm donation suffer serious identity problems according to both empirical studies and first-person testimonies.ⁱⁱⁱ A study in the journal *Human Reproduction* concluded, “Disclosure to children conceived with donor gametes should not be optional.”^{iv}
- Children and adults conceived via sperm donors have expressed a deep sense of disenfranchised grief, “a grief which is: not recognized and supported by the community...mourners whose grief is disenfranchised are...cut off from the social supports and so have few opportunities to express and resolve their feelings...either the relationship is not recognized, the loss is not recognized, or the griever is not recognized.”^v
- Sperm donors often regret their decision later in life and often go searching for their children.^{vi}

2. Sperm Donation is Often Eugenic and Coercive

- 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.
- Ads that highlight easy money while helping someone have a child often motivate men to donate their sperm, with little or no information presented on the realities these children and they themselves will face later in their lives.

3. Sperm Donation Poses Psychological and Legal Harms to Donors

- As there is no regulation, it’s impossible to know just how many children are conceived through sperm donation each year. Many countries, like the U.S., don’t limit how many times a man may donate, meaning it is not unreasonable that one could father hundreds of children. Later in life many sperm donors regret their decision as they realize they are responsible for biological offspring that they have effectively abandoned.
- At the time of donation many men do not fully understand how their decision to donate their sperm might eventually affect many others within his own family.
- The biological link between parent and child is undeniably intimate, and when severed has lasting repercussions felt by both parties. A 2013 study in *Reproductive BioMedicine* surveyed 108 parents of children conceived via egg donation and found that fifty percent regretted using anonymous donation for these very reasons.^{vii}
- The practice of sperm donation is inconsistent with the United Nation’s Convention on the Rights of the Child which holds that “the child...shall have the right to know and be cared for by his or her parents.”
- Some donors become tangled in legal battles over child support.^{viii}

ⁱ The term sperm “donation” is euphemistic in nature as the “donor” is compensated for his sperm.

ⁱⁱ Rosanna Hertz, Margaret K. Nelson, Wendy Kramer, 2013. *Social Science and Medicine*. “Donor-Conceived Offspring Conceive of the Donor: The Relevance of Age, Awareness, and Family Form.”

ⁱⁱⁱ See AnonymousUs.org, an online story collective for real life testimonials for voluntary and involuntary participants of assisted reproduction. See also the 2012 documentary *Anonymous Father’s Day*. <<http://www.anonymousfathersday.com>>.

^{iv} McGee, G., Brakman, S.V., and Gurmankin, A.D. (2001). *Human Reproduction*. “Gamete donation and anonymity: disclosure to children conceived with donor gametes should not be optional.” <<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/11574486>>.

^v <https://www.donorsiblingregistry.com/sites/default/files/files/rose_fromabundle.PDF>.

^{vi} See for example, Jadva, V., Freeman, T., Kramer, W., and Golombok, S. (2010). *Human Reproduction*, “Sperm and oocyte donors’ experiences of anonymous donation and subsequent contact with their donor offspring.”

<https://www.donorsiblingregistry.com/sites/default/files/images/docs/Sperm_and_Egg_Donors_Experiences.pdf>.

^{vii} Frith, L., Sawyer, N., and Kramer, W. (2012). *Reproductive BioMedicine*. “Forming a family with sperm donation: a survey of 244 non-biological parents.” <https://www.donorsiblingregistry.com/sites/default/files/images/docs/Non-Bio_Parent_Paper_DSR.pdf>.

^{viii} “Kansas court says sperm donor must pay child support.” <<http://www.cnn.com/2014/01/23/justice/kansas-sperm-donation/>>.