



Egg Donor Stories

Thinking about selling your eggs? Thinking about buying another woman's eggs? Think again!

Since we first released our documentary *Eggsploitation*, seeking to expose the truth about egg “donation,” we have been contacted by many women who want to share the story of their experience. Now we have gathered several of these stories together in one place.

We are sharing these stories with you in the hopes of educating other women who may be considering selling or donating their eggs, and to inform people who may be looking to purchase eggs.

Thinking about selling your eggs? Thinking about buying another woman's eggs? Think again!

Learn more!
purchase our documentary
Eggsploitation
today!
eggsploitation.com

Mimi's Story

Sometimes I wonder what my children look like . . .

Jennifer Lahl—Executive Producer, Director, and Writer of Eggsplotation interviews via email a woman who just sold her eggs for the fourth time.



Mimi: Hello Jennifer Lahl,

My name is Mimi and I recently finished my fourth and last donation that I ever plan on doing. The reason for this last donation being my final one is basically because I have developed this intense sense of anxiety of what my future entails with my own fertility.

During my first three donations everything went very smoothly. I was given Menopur and Bravelle for the self-injecting medications. I was eager and excited for my first three donations because of the great feeling I received about helping couples have babies. I have always been a very altruistic person, and the money they offered was also very enticing since I was a college student without a job, just trying to get by.

I researched online some side effects and possible long term effects of egg donation, but never really got any sufficient information. I also asked the doctors and nurses about it and they made it seem like there are no risks.

After each donation, I started to gain a significant amount of weight. When I did my first egg donation I weighed 135 pounds, and now I weigh 160. This weight gain has only been in a 1.5 year span. I haven't changed my exercises or eating routine that much, so I am very confused why this is happening. I am completely self-conscious now, and the weight is not coming off no matter what I do.

After this last donation I had more severe side effects than I had in my past donations. I was extremely bloated. I could feel every step I took in my stomach. Every bump in the road while driving hurt like heck. I called my clinic and they said it's nothing to worry about and that it would go away. Luckily, it did go away. I am now 9 days post retrieval. I haven't gotten my period yet but am hoping so soon.

The reason that I am emailing you is that I am scared out of my wits that I am going to develop some kind of reproductive cancer and or not be able to have children of my own one day. I am 23 years old and am planning on having children in my late twenties. If I couldn't do that because of a few egg donations, I would be completely devastated.

My donation stories are not as intense as some of the other women who have gone through the process, but now I am so paranoid and I feel like I was taken for granted and almost as though I was tricked. Is there any advice you could give me to help put my mind at ease?

Lahl: Mimi, Thank you for taking the time to write and tell us your story. I'm very sorry to hear about this. And I hope your health is ok in the short- and long-term. I wish I had advice to give. I would definitely get copies of all your medical records though and keep them. Did you do all your donations with the same clinic? What state are you in?

Mimi: I did do donations at all the same clinic and I am in Hawaii. Thank you for your caring response! :)

Lahl: Ok, well ask them for copies of ALL your records from all three of the donations. You should go see an independent doctor and get a complete physical exam—someone you trust who is not involved with this industry.

Tell everyone young woman you know about your story so they will NOT sell (or donate) their eggs!

Mimi: Thank you so much for the information. I will ask for copies of all of my donations and I will inform other young women. I just got a full physical with my family doctor and OB/GYN and they said everything looks fine. But of course the long-term effects are unknown. Thank you again.

Lahl: Can I post your story?

Mimi: Don't use my real name; I just wouldn't want the agency finding out. I just watched your film and I loved it. It was very informative and made me really think about the decisions that I have made. I am more

than happy to share my story with others and if you have any questions in particular that you would like to ask me feel free.

I am a very open person. Also, if you want, I can keep you in touch for the future if you would like to know of any medical complications that I may have later due to my many donations.

Lahl: Do you mind telling me how much you were paid for each donation? And do you worry/wonder about the children born from your eggs?

Mimi:

1st donation: \$5,000

2nd donation: \$5,500

3rd donation: \$6,000

4th donation: \$6,500

Sometimes I wonder what my children look like. Sometimes I wish that I could see pictures of them and could keep in contact with the families. But I know that will never happen, and I have been able to move past it.

Sometimes I catch myself going on the agency Facebook page and seeing pictures of the babies that have been born. I wonder if some of them look like me or if one of them could be mine. I am more interested in what my own babies will look like. It doesn't make me upset or sad, just curious. I know the pregnancies were successful.

Sindy's Story

An industry thriving on profits and reputation has little incentive to report adverse events, or protect the health and medical rights of donors . . .

In April 2013, Sindy, an MD, PhD, and former egg donor, testified before the California state Assembly regarding AB 926, which sought to pay women for eggs for scientific research.



My name is Sindy. I am an M.D. with a Ph.D. in Biology, and I am a former egg donor. I have published in scientific journals including *Nature* and *Science*. I am a supporter of stem cell research.

When I heard this bill had been introduced into the California legislature I assumed that egg donors finally would be given the protections of research subjects—the most basic of which is attention to the effects of the intervention on their health. I was disappointed to find that AB 926 only serves the interests of those who want the eggs, not the egg providers.

In 2001, I signed up for egg donation after researching medical literature. I injected hormones for many days. Early on I expressed concerns about the large numbers of egg follicles seen on my ultrasound, but doctors reassured me that this was great news.

Then, before the retrieval my blood, estrogen levels rose much higher than anticipated. They decided to continue. The next morning, I underwent transvaginal needle retrieval of approximately 60 eggs.

I woke from the anesthesia feeling weak, nauseous, and short of breath. They told me I was ready to go home but I could not stand. After 8 hours of encouraging me to go home they FINALLY admitted me to the hospital.

Soon it became undeniable that I was going into shock from blood loss. I was taken to the operating room for emergency surgery and blood transfusion. Had I trusted their judgment one last time and gone home, I would have died.

After surgery, I had to be kept in the ICU. When the egg retrieval doctor came to see me she suggested that the bleeding was due to a genetic bleeding disorder (that is, my own fault). Testing revealed no such thing.

I was shocked by this dismissive attitude from a doctor of a top fertility treatment center, who has published articles on safety evaluation and recommendations for egg harvesting.

I fear that cases like mine are buried deep by fertility centers concerned about their image. An industry thriving on profits and reputation has little incentive to report adverse events, or protect the health and medical rights of donors.

Later, I developed unexplained infertility and had to be treated with even more hormones and surgeries. I still

worry about the long-term risk of cancer. Please don't expand the market in human eggs unless minimal protections for egg donors are ensured, especially the long term follow up necessary to make genuine informed consent possible.

Note: California Governor Jerry Brown vetoed the bill in August 2013. For more, see <http://www.cbc-network.org/2013/08/governor-brown-does-the-right-thing-for-women-in-california/>



Y's Story

I will never be able to have any of my own biological children . . .

I donated my eggs back in 2002 when I was 22 years old. I needed the money in order to move to a new city and start college. I received around \$4,000 in compensation.

In 2008, at the age of 28, I began to have the typical symptoms of menopause—terrible hot flashes, irritability, no period, and a low libido. I went to my ob/gyn and I received a blood test and was immediately referred to a reproductive endocrinologist (RE). The RE said that he was sure it was just a fluke and maybe my pituitary gland was misfiring.

When the results of my blood test came in, he very matter-of-factly, said "well, looks like I was wrong, your ovaries aren't producing anymore eggs."

I was devastated.

Two years after I donated my eggs, I became pregnant and elected to terminate the pregnancy because I knew I wasn't ready to be a parent. I have regretted that decision to this day.

I have absolutely no family history of infertility, in fact, I really don't have any family history of any illnesses. My oldest aunt died of lung cancer but she was a long-time smoker. My grandmother died of an aneurysm at around the age of 75 and my grandfather died of old age at 96.

I don't know if my egg donation is the cause of this, but all I do know is that I will never be able to have any of my own biological children. I have a sister who says she will donate her eggs, but how can I morally ask her to do that knowing what has happened to me? She is four years younger than me and does not have any children of her own.

I would like to know what my options are at this point (if any). I don't remember them telling me that there was a possibility of me becoming infertile. I remember the contract being very long so I can't remember the exact language in it.

Please help me, I don't know what to do.

Shavonne's Story: Market Competition Collision

Money is not worth the health risk . . .

Shavonne was first asked to sell her eggs to help make a baby, then the agency asked her to consider selling her eggs for embryonic stem cell research.

Lahl: You saw an ad in a local paper looking for African-American egg donors. The ad offered \$6,000 for selling your eggs. Why did you decide to do this?

Shavonne: The clinic stated that if my cycle completed, I would receive the total sum of \$6,000. I thought it was a harmless way to make extra money, according to the minimal side effects that they presented during my orientation. I was 28 years old, and the money motivated me to do this.

Lahl: When you went to the clinic for the initial screening, you told me that you were one of the only young women there who asked a lot of questions about the risks and the procedure. How were your questions received?

Shavonne: I was surprised that no one else had any questions at all and that I was the only one asking



questions. I think the clinic personnel felt a little annoyed with me, since I asked so many questions.

Lahl: After you had agreed to sell your eggs, the couple wanting your eggs changed their mind and no longer wanted your eggs. What did the clinic ask you?

Shavonne: They asked me if I'd be willing to donate my eggs to embryonic stem cell research, and I agreed to that because I didn't mind them being used for that.

Lahl: So you went ahead with the egg donation procedure, and you had your eggs retrieved on Thanksgiving Day, 2006! Why that day? And tell me about how you were feeling at this time.

Shavonne: I took a drug called Follistim to super ovulate me. The retrieval went fine, but not too long after that my stomach started to swell, and every time I leaned over I could feel my ovaries "plop." I went to see the doctor, and he told me I had OHSS, and he then said, "We see girls like you all the time." I looked 4 months pregnant. They told me to go home and eat a lot of protein. My mother was staying with me at the time, and one night my stomach was so swollen and I could hardly breathe. My mother said, "That's enough," and took me to the emergency room. The nurse stuck a needle in my stomach, and it was a loud pop I could feel, like a balloon was popped. She stuck a bag on the end of the needle to drain the fluid, and the bag filled with 2 quarts in about 5 minutes.

She had to quickly put another bag on and some of the fluid spilled on the floor. She filled the next bag too—in all, 4 quarts were drained out of my stomach. I stayed in the hospital for 2 1/2 more days while they drained more fluid. I had a lot of pain in my abdomen. The staff at the hospital would shake their head at me and took pity on me, because I was an egg donor and they said they saw this a lot.

Lahl: How are things for you now and how is your health?

Shavonne: It took a year and a half to clear up the medical bills. My menstrual cycles are few and far between. I was pregnant in 2008, but I lost the baby. I hope to have children some day, and every time I do have a period, I get really excited because I rarely have them anymore.

Lahl: You told me about your girlfriend, who donated her eggs to her sister, but her sister never used the eggs. Can you tell me any more of her story? Did she have the same health complications and end up in the hospital with OHSS, too?

Shavonne: Yes, she wants to tell you her story too, so please call her. Her sister never used the eggs and never offered to pay her medical bills after the OHSS. She had the exact same symptoms as I had, but the difference was, instead of admitting her to the hospital and draining the fluid, the doctors turned her away. She had to let the fluid naturally drain from her

abdomen. She said that it took a few months to move around with ease and no pain. She also stated that she looked 4 months pregnant and had severe lower abdominal pain. She is currently unable to claim the eggs that she donated and was never compensated monetarily because of her relationship to the receiver. She also has had a miscarriage since her donor complication.

Lahl: You contacted my colleague, Dr. Jennifer Schneider, because you found her article written about her daughter's death. Why did you want to tell your story?

Shavonne: I wanted to share my story because I am still confused and hurt by the situation. It was a helpless, humiliating experience for me, and I had a hard time finding any information regarding complications from OHSS on the Internet. I have read many stories regarding young women developing cancers and becoming infertile, and think that this information should be available to the public. Even after I asked the questions, in the back of my mind I kept thinking that I would be in that small percentage of women, and I was.

Lahl: What would you say to a young woman thinking about donating/selling her eggs?

Shavonne: I would tell these young women that the money is not worth the health risk. Should they

proceed, I would explain the process and my story, and then tell them to do their own research.

Lahl: What do you hope will happen when others hear your story?

Shavonne: I hope that my story and all others will give these women a great depth and detail as to what really happens when you donate, and the causes and risks associated with the medication and procedure in general. My research had gaps in it because the stories of the complications were just not available.

R.D.'s Story

I now would never donate ever again . . .

I was an egg donor. I did three cycles in 2007. I donated anonymously to three different families. I was never told if any children came out of the cycles. I was paid \$8,000 per cycle. I did have a lot of cramping and was extremely bloated like I was pregnant after the retrieval. They call this ovarian hyperstimulation syndrome (OHSS).

In May 2012, my fourth time donating my eggs, I thought I was donating them as part of a medical study, but then I found out my eggs were going to be stored in an egg bank for someone to use later on for fertility treatment. I still decided to do it.

I went to the facility to have a physical, ultrasound, blood work, urine test, and psychiatric exam. Two weeks later I got a call saying everything looked great and I met the egg donor banks qualifications. I started the hormone medications (Gonal-f and Luveris) that first started out as two medications in one shot that I mixed. Then towards the end of the cycle it was three medications (Gonal-f, Luveris, and Ganirelix) in two shots that I also mixed together myself.

I drove two and a half hours from my home in CT to Boston every day for almost two weeks for blood work and ultrasound. Once I started going to the facility every day I was always called later in the afternoon by a nurse to let me know how everything was. I was never told anything was wrong. I did mention at one of

my appointments during an ultrasound that I was having extremely bad cramps. She said that wasn't surprising since the eggs were getting much bigger.

Three days before retrieval I got a call saying things were great but the doctor may want to cancel the cycle because the eggs weren't big enough for retrieval. They have to measure at least 18 cm. At this point I was so stunned and shocked by the cycle possibly getting cancelled that I could barely think straight. What was she talking about cancelled?! No one ever told me that there was even a slight chance that this could happen.

Despite my concern she said not to worry. Take all medications but do them all separate—which meant 3 shots in my abdomen—and if I had any extra medication to take that as well so my eggs would get bigger. Fortunately for me, I didn't have any extra medications to take. I called the lady who set me up with the facility and told her about the cycle possibly getting cancelled. She was shocked as well and said it didn't make any sense.

I went back to the facility the next day for the same ritual. I asked the nurse doing my ultrasound how my eggs were measuring and if she thought they would cancel. I was told there were eleven eggs and all were measuring 20 cm and up. She was confused that anyone would think to cancel a cycle that was looking so good. I went home reassured only to be let down hours later.

The doctor decided to cancel my cycle. I was shocked. Here I am pumped full of hormones, bruises

all over my stomach and arms, with eleven oversized eggs inside of me. I was told the doctor thought he would only be able to get nine eggs and it wouldn't be "worth it" to do the retrieval. How could 9 eggs not be worth it? The nurse was so rude and I was so upset. When I asked what I was supposed to do with the eggs that were inside me, she said they'd go away and to take the HCG trigger shot. That was not a reassuring answer.

I called my contact person immediately and she told me that everything would get sorted out. The next day I spoke to the third party coordinator who I had been dealing with since the very beginning. Hoping I was just "dreaming" the day before I half expected her to say that the doctor changed his mind and they would do the retrieval.

Unfortunately, I was left more hurt and confused than before. She stated that when they did my physical they knew I would have maybe 13 eggs. As my previous cycles I produced 10-12 eggs so they knew what to expect. She said they were hoping to get double that and the doctor wanted to try anyway, despite the facts. She said there was always a chance it would get cancelled.

There was nothing in the contract that said that this could be cancelled. I was never told that they were going to try to get double. I now know I wasn't told much. If I was told in the beginning any of this I would not have risked my health. I was not given a choice in the beginning nor at the end. I was told that the eggs would either come out or evaporate on their own but there was no guarantee this would definitely happen.

I had eleven oversized eggs inside me that the doctor wouldn't be taking out, and I had to hope nothing would go wrong. I felt used. I trusted these people. I was left not knowing what was going to happen to me and had to figure it out on my own. No one told me anything or offered me after care. Thankfully I knew not to have sex until I got my period. If not I could've easily been pregnant with eleven babies.

I should've been told that. It was their job to keep me informed and they didn't do that. I was offered \$1,200 for my time compared to the \$7,000 I was to receive after retrieval. It was a smack in the face. This never was about money to me. I wanted to help someone have a baby. My intention was to take the hormone medications as instructed then willingly give the facility my eggs for a future family to use. I never knew or expected to do my part to only be told I didn't meet their expectations.

The day I was supposed to have the eggs taken out I was in horrendous pain. I had cramps so bad that I couldn't bend, walk, or even rock my son to sleep for three days. I wouldn't have willingly put myself through this.

Because of all this I now would never donate ever again. Its a shame. I also have to pay my own medical expenses if anything in the future does happen to me. I will now have to go to my own gynecologist and make sure those eleven eggs are gone and not causing any issues. Had I known what the risks were of taking the medications and not having my eggs taken out I would never have done this.

Rose from New Mexico

The money is a coercive aspect of this practice . . .

Lahl: How did you first learn about egg donation, and what made you consider it?

Rose: I saw the ads in the University of New Mexico daily paper. I am a low-income student and was working and struggling to make ends meet. I was definitely financially motivated. I didn't want a child then, but was OK with helping someone else have a child. I filled out the application, and in about a week, I was contacted and interviewed.

Lahl: So you were accepted and moved forward with the donation process?

Rose: Yes, I signed an informed consent document, which I don't remember the specifics of. I do remember signing that they weren't liable if anything happened to me, and I said it was OK if the children produced from my eggs wanted to contact me in the future. I sold my eggs twice in 2007 when I was 25 years old (spring and summer) and one more time in the fall of 2008 when I was 26. I was paid \$2,000 each time, so I made a total of \$6,000. I was not given a 1099 form, but was paid by a check.



Lahl: What was your experience working with the agency, physician, and staff?

Rose: I had a lot of counseling and genetic screening done to be sure I was healthy and able to make this decision. I worked with the same people for all three of my donations. Overall, it was a good experience, but being an egg donor was quite an experience. I was super aware of how huge my ovaries were. My post-op recovery was good and uneventful.

Lahl: How was it that you came to contact me and want to tell me your story?

Rose: I heard about the film *Eggsploitation* from my health and policy class at UNM as I am a student at the UNM Health Science Center. I was interested in the fact that egg donors are not seen as patients, per se, and was interested to learn about the global perspective in reproductive technologies. My background and interests made me concerned with the lack of peer-reviewed studies of egg donors/egg donation, issues surrounding proper informed consent, the coercive ads, and the strong sense women have in their own sense of identity as "helpers" for others, which often means our decisions may not take into account our own needs for health and well-being.

Lahl: A common thread I see in the numerous interviews I have done with many egg donors is their sense of being health conscious, living a healthy

lifestyle with being concerned about the foods they eat and getting proper exercise. With your interests in diet and nutrition, what did you think about when you were considering the hormones you'd be injecting into your body?

Rose: I've been a vegetarian/vegan for a long time, and it's important to me to eat local and organic, but I had a lot of stress in my life about paying the rent and I really needed the money. I told myself I was doing a good thing, to help someone else, so I just didn't think about the drugs I was going to put into my body. I took these drugs for the process each time: Lupron, Centrotide, FSH, and Human Chorionic Gonadotropin

Lahl: So you had no known short- or long-term risks as a result of selling your eggs three times, and yet you remain skeptical about egg donation/selling?

Rose: I believe, fundamentally, the money is a coercive aspect of this practice. These technologies are only available for high-income people, and there are no long-term studies done on the health risks. Also, I am concerned about the genetic selection preference in designing children to be what we want them to be.

Lahl: Were your friends and family supportive of your decision to sell your eggs?

Rose: My family gave me a lot of flak and harassed me because I said I didn't want any children of my own. But, they told me, you really are a mom!

Lahl: If another woman asked you about selling her eggs, what would you tell her?

Rose: I would show them your film, *Eggsploitation*, and tell them about the risks, and I would encourage them not to do it. I'd try to help them in any way I could so that they wouldn't feel the financial need.

Lahl: Why did you agree to doing this interview and going public with your story?

Rose: I wanted to add my voice to the number of other stories.

Linda from Los Angeles

I felt used . . .

Lahl: You told me you saw the ad on Craigslist's posting by the fertility center, looking for Asian egg donors. What made you answer this ad?

Linda: I thought I fit the description very well: Great grades, college educated, great looks, and genetics. The list could go on for all the ego reasons I would want to do this.

Lahl: Were you in need of money?

Linda: Yes! I had spent \$30k to renovate my parents' old house because it was falling apart, and they did not have the money to fix it themselves, and it was not in living condition for anyone to live in, not even myself. It was in my grandfather's deed to fix the estate if he were to pass away. He died three years ago, the year before I decided to be a donor.

Lahl: Were you wanting to help someone out?

Linda: I was sitting in the lobby, waiting to get my blood work done for my pre-screening to become an egg donor, and I saw an older couple sitting and waiting to talk to the doctor. Seeing them in the lobby waiting made me realize I was doing something for older Asian couples who could not have children. I figured if I give an act of kindness, I'm saving this

couple's marriage, because I understand in my culture a woman who cannot bear a child is useless. I remembered my mother's best friend going through this procedure, and this was the only way she was able to bring a baby into this world. I felt like I could help other older Asian women in her shoes.

Lahl: Would you have answered the ad and just "donated" your eggs?

Linda: I probably would have if I knew that there weren't such horrible, long-term side effects, and if I knew exactly who my eggs were going to (relatives or family). But, I would not just have answered the ad if the money factor wasn't a part of the equation. I needed the money because my parents were not going to contribute to the renovation.

Lahl: You did three donations in all: one in April of 2009, one in April of 2010, and the last in December of 2010. All three donations were done with the same agency. How did each of the donations go?

Linda: The first time went very easy; the pain wasn't that bad. However, it still hurt and I had pain in my abdomen, and I couldn't walk afterward. It took me four hours to wake up. The second time, it hurt a lot almost right after I woke up two hours after the egg retrieval. [I had] the same pain in my abdomen, and I couldn't walk after. The third time was by far the worst. I woke up two hours after, but the pain hit me four hours later. It hurt so bad I couldn't walk! Five

days later, I had retained so much fluid inside my body, I could not breath right and I could not sleep from the pain in my abdomen. I had to go to the hospital because I felt like I was going to stop breathing and my heart was going to stop. I looked pregnant. This third time, my body just did not want to take the hormones anymore. I know it just wanted to shut down on me.

Lahl: You mentioned that the director of the agency at first was very friendly and pleasant, and then she got very pushy and the doctor wanted to just "pump" you up with drugs to get as many eggs as possible. Tell me more about that, how you were feeling about the treatment.

Linda: I felt used and just like an egg producer. I felt like that all they cared about were my eggs, and not me and my health and well-being.

Lahl: Were you able to advocate for yourself? Did you feel they listened to you and were concerned for your health?

Linda: I don't think so. They wanted me out of the hospital as soon as possible to take the liability off their shoulders.

Lahl: Tell me about your concerns about where your eggs ended up?

Linda: I have no clue what has become of my eggs. They could have brokered them to many people, and they could be capitalizing on them even more. Supposedly, a couple who really needed my eggs got them to make a baby, however, they harvested 12 eggs the first cycle, 12 eggs the second cycle, and 15 the third time. That's a total of 39 eggs. But looking at the pictures on my ultrasounds showing the formed eggs, it looked like a lot more eggs each time.

Lahl: Do you know if you have children out there?

Linda: The director of the clinic, who was also my egg broker who paid me at the end of each donation, said that the baby boy was beautiful, but she could be lying. I really could not ask any more questions though, because I know psychologically it's not healthy for my mind to really want to know. I have no rights to want to know because of the contract I signed with the clinic.

Lahl: What are your thoughts on the children created by your eggs?

Linda: Well, there are a billion people in China, so what difference would it make if there was another little mini me out there or not. However, me not having any ties to any baby would be ideal. I just hope that whoever decided to have these children are going to give them the nurture that the children need to have the best potential it could have. As a child growing up, I felt like my parents didn't give me their fullest, and I

hope that these parents, who decided to bring my genetics to life, decide to give and spoil this child with their 110 percent efforts.

Lahl: You had to be admitted into the hospital for severe OHSS, indicating that you looked pregnant and that your lungs were filled with fluid. How did you end up in the hospital?

Linda: I thought it was just something little, but the pain was so bad that I could not sleep. The fluid would not escape my body, and in my stool there was blood. It just wasn't good and not normal. I ended up staying in the hospital for four days. I did not leave the bed for those four days. I slept all four days, and they monitored me peeing and put me on monitors and gave me shots in an I.V. and all sorts of meds. They weren't even sure what was going on with me! They had to call the fertility doctor at 4am to find out. It was the worst pain I had experienced. I still won't forget the guy's face who did my exam. He kept asking me if I was wearing anything under my shirt. There was fluid or possibly even blood inside my chest that didn't belong there.

Lahl: Who paid your bills?

Linda: Their insurance company. And I'm still getting bills today and just faxing them right back to them.

Lahl: Looking back on your health before your donations, how is your health now?

Linda: My health now isn't as great as it was. Before I began donating, I was 135 lbs. and a cross-country runner. I had no problem getting up early in the morning and jogging five miles or so before work. Now I am 158 lbs., but was 180 lbs. when I was in the hospital. Now I'm on a strict vegan diet and working out and running 5k to remind myself I'm still standing, and working hard to improve and better my health after my near-death experience.

Lahl: You contacted me and said that you wanted to tell your "near-death" story. Why do you want to tell your story?

Linda: I don't want others to experience what I went through. It felt like I was fighting a cancer that no one knew about, and I felt so alone in this world. No one else was in my shoes, and I got into this position myself and no one would understand—not my parents, not my family, not my girlfriend. I just want people to be aware of the consequences, because it's not something you think about before you decide to sign your life on paper to an agency who is out to just take from you for their best interest and not yours. I went through this three times, and I didn't learn my lesson until I almost faced my death three months ago. I don't ever want to put myself through this experience again or see others go through what I went through.

Lahl: What do you want people to know?

Linda: That you can possibly die from this, and it's not a joke, or worth \$5k or any amount of money. Losing your life would end your chances of making that money, period. I was a victim and I will stand and speak about it. They are out there preying on ones like me.

Lahl: What would you say to a woman who was thinking of donating/selling her eggs?

Linda: JUST DONT DO IT. You don't want the psychology of the idea of a baby out there looking like you. You definitely don't want to go through the procedure, the injections, the medication, and all the office procedures. It will ruin your relationship with your family, and if you think it's a way to get back at them because you feel like they don't care, this is NOT the way.

Lahl: What should be done for you, given your experience?

Linda: It's not about me at this point, but I hope that my experience can be told and shared with the rest of the world because this egg donation operation is not something that should continue on. I hope that I can help to form a foundation and a bond to help women who have experienced these same issues that I've dealt with, and be there for one another in a time where maybe in the future among the group of women who have been egg donors, [if some] go

through cancers or long term problems that were never foreshadowed, that we can as a group of people be there for one another in this experience.

Lahl: Do you think the agency owes you anything?

Linda: Too much, at this point. I don't even know if a lawsuit would be enough to discuss in detail what they owe me for their wrongdoings. I can only pray that others out there don't go through what I went through.

Lahl: Have they offered to pay you more because of all of your health complications?

Linda: Not enough to go through what I've gone through thus far and what I'm still going through today.

Lahl: Are you concerned for your future health or future fertility?

Linda: Absolutely! But I just have to live day by day and stand strong no matter what happens, and be thankful I am still alive today and hopefully tomorrow.

Maggie

I have incurable cancer and can't have kids . . .

An email we received in January 2015.



I had been an egg donor about 10 times through my twenties with the same doctor. I signed up once, and after that, they kept calling me because I responded so well to the hormones and they always got lots of eggs from me each cycle. I now am fighting stage 4 invasive ductal carcinoma, a breast cancer that has already spread to bones and my liver. I know in my heart that it had to come from the hormones I was exposed to during donation. I am currently working with an attorney to see if I have any legal rights. I was never notified of any risks from any medications I was given. I'm not looking for a big payout. I want to expose what is going on so that no women have to go through what I have gone through if there is a cause-effect connection here.

I have no other risk factors for my cancer other than being female. My cancer is 100% estrogen positive. I have no family history of any cancer, I have no genetic cancer link, and I have never even smoked one puff of one cigarette in my life. I eat mostly organic and whole foods, mostly vegetarian, and I exercise. I share this information with you because I want you to know that I am a healthy and smart woman that cares about my body and what I put in to

it. I feel like by not disclosing to me the danger of the birth control and the hormones being used in the donation process, the doctor put me at unknowing risk. I would never have donated had I been presented that information. It was not worth my life and my future just to help someone else become a parent.

I am only 33 years old. I had to have a full hysterectomy this past summer. The irony here is that I have lost my chance at having kids (save adoption) after helping others to do so. I now face an uncertain future. There is no current cure for stage 4 breast cancer. I'm not married. I think about what it will be like to have to share my diagnosis with any future prospective partner. I imagine saying, hey, I have incurable cancer and can't have kids and I have all these scars from multiple surgeries. Plus, treatment is expensive and I live in a community property state, so we can't get married or you'll be on the hook for all my medical bills. I already had to file bankruptcy.

I know life is never fair, but I feel a bit like for the doctor I worked with, somewhere along the way he made a decision to sacrifice my health for whatever money he was going to make off of me. Maybe this isn't the case and there is no connection between the two, but I would really like to talk with you. If there is a connection, I want to do everything I can to be a part of any studies and to make women aware of what they are really doing when they donate.

Thank you,

Maggie

Thinking About Donating Your Eggs? Think Again

Egg donation is risky business. But unlike other high-risk jobs that offer appropriate compensation for the dangers (e.g., skyscraper window washing), the egg donation process is inherently risky, from beginning to end. What are those risks? Stroke, organ failure, infection, cancer, loss of future fertility, and in rare instances, even death. Sadly, longer-term risks remain a mystery, let alone properly understood, because of the lack of any long-term medical research or follow-ups on egg donors.



But isn't egg donation like organ donation? In organ donation, the donor assumes risks to his own health in order to save a patient's life—to help a sick or dying person. But the recipient of the egg donor's gametes is not sick or unhealthy—not a patient, but a consumer, purchasing her eggs. The end purpose of the donation is importantly different, and therefore, not analogous to organ donation. And society rightfully condemns the selling or payment for organs in order to prevent abuses and save lives, whereas the large sums of monetary compensation to women egg donors causes them to be exploited by their need for money. Financial incentives impede true, freely given informed consent. Like organs, eggs are a non-replenishable resource. Women are born with a finite number of eggs—and egg donation strips women of this limited resource.

And whether the egg donation debate is around the need for human eggs by IVF clinics, who need eggs to help infertile couple build a family; or whether the embryonic stem cell researcher's need for human eggs to find cures for disease, this practice is especially egregious given the speculative and questionable nature of both of these enterprises. Most IVF cycles fail (only a 30-40% success rate) and the effectiveness of current stem cell therapy is all very speculative.

Ask yourself this question now. Would you donate your eggs? Would you want your 18 year old daughter, your sister, or your girlfriend or wife to do this? Most people, once properly informed of the risks say, "No! Keep your hands off our ovaries!"

Thinking about donating your eggs? Think again!



About *Eggsploitation*

The infertility industry in the United States has grown to a multi-billion dollar business. What is its main commodity? Human eggs. Young women all over the world are solicited by ads—via college campus bulletin boards, social media, online classifieds—offering up to \$100,000 for their “donated” eggs, to “help make someone’s dream come true.” But who is this egg donor? Is she treated justly? What are the short- and long-term risks to her health? The answers to these questions will disturb you . . .

Produced by The Center for Bioethics and Culture (*Lines That Divide*, 2009), *Eggsploitation* spotlights the booming business of human eggs told through the tragic and revealing stories of real women who became involved and whose lives have been changed forever.

For more information, visit
<http://www.eggsploitation.com>

You can watch *Eggsploitation* on the following services:

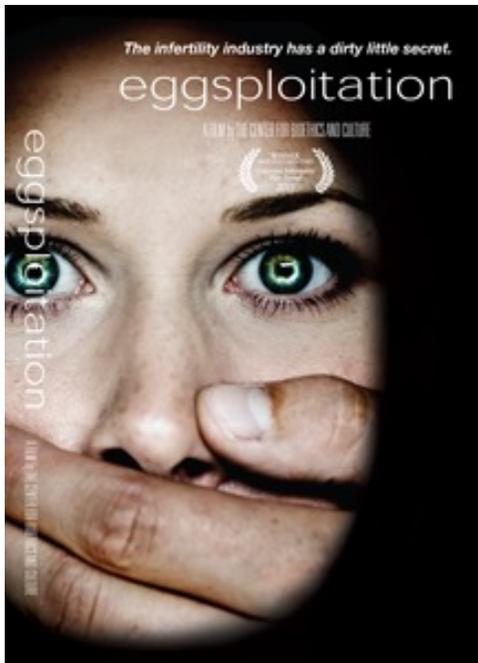
[iTunes](#)

[Amazon Instant](#)

[Google Play](#)

[Xbox](#)

[DVD](#)



What People Are Saying About *Eggsploitation*

Eggsploitation makes a powerful, provocative and, ultimately, modest proposal: women who consider donating eggs have a right to complete information on the risks involved. Lured by promises of sometimes desperately needed money and a chance to help another woman, vulnerable young women face unknown dangers to their health in an unregulated industry. Eggsploitation is a compelling call for oversight and research so that egg donors can be truly informed before giving consent.

— **Patricia Ireland**, President of NOW (National Organization for Women) 1991-2001, author of *What Women Want*

It is a scandal that the infertility industry has gone so many years without collecting adequate safety data on the risks of multiple egg extraction. This makes informed consent impossible for the thousands of young women now undergoing so-called 'egg donation' procedures. Every young woman considering 'egg donation' as a way to generate income for school tuition or other critical expenditures should see this film first. And policy makers need to insist that we finally conduct the research that should have been done years ago.

— **Judy Norsigian**, Executive Director, Our Bodies Ourselves

I've been a women's rights advocate since 1963, but this film was an eye-opener for me because I knew nothing about the multi-billion dollar egg donation industry, the physical risks to young women that accompany egg donation, and the need for research in this area.

I hope this film gets the wide distribution it deserves because the information in it is vital for young women in the US and abroad, their significant others, their families, and their societies.

— **Sonia Pressman Fuentes**, Lawyer, Author, Public Speaker, Feminist Activist; Cofounder of NOW (National Organization for Women); First Woman Attorney, Office of the General Counsel, EEOC (Equal Employment Opportunity Commission)

Eggsploitation is a powerful and compelling film on the extreme risks and disregard shown to women . . . a must see for all egg donors and fertility patients. The infertility industry's practice of reproductive endocrinology is a "dirty little secret" and should be secret no more.

— **Lynne Millican**, Founder, LupronVictimsHub.com

This powerful, important and informative documentary gives viewers true insight into the egg donation industry and helps us to better understand the desperate need for regulation and oversight. All prospective egg donors (and recipients) as well as all practitioners and agency employees in the egg donation industry should be required to watch this film!

— **Wendy Kramer**, Director and Co-Founder, Donor Sibling Registry

<http://www.eggsploitation.com>

The Center for Bioethics and Culture

About

The Center for Bioethics and Culture (CBC) addresses bioethical issues that most profoundly affect our humanity, especially issues that arise in the lives of the most vulnerable among us. The CBC works through a variety of media platforms—documentary film, writing, speaking, interviews in mainstream media, and new media platforms.



The CBC Mission

The Center for Bioethics and Culture exists to initiate, facilitate, and enhance conversations focused on the intersection of health and wellness, medicine, science and technology, and law and public policy around matters in bioethics. Specifically, we intentionally bring diverse voices together, across the spectrum of human experiences, building common cause in order to answer important questions.

The CBC Vision

By working with cultural leaders and decision-makers, progress in biotechnology will unite around a common human good promoting human flourishing.

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